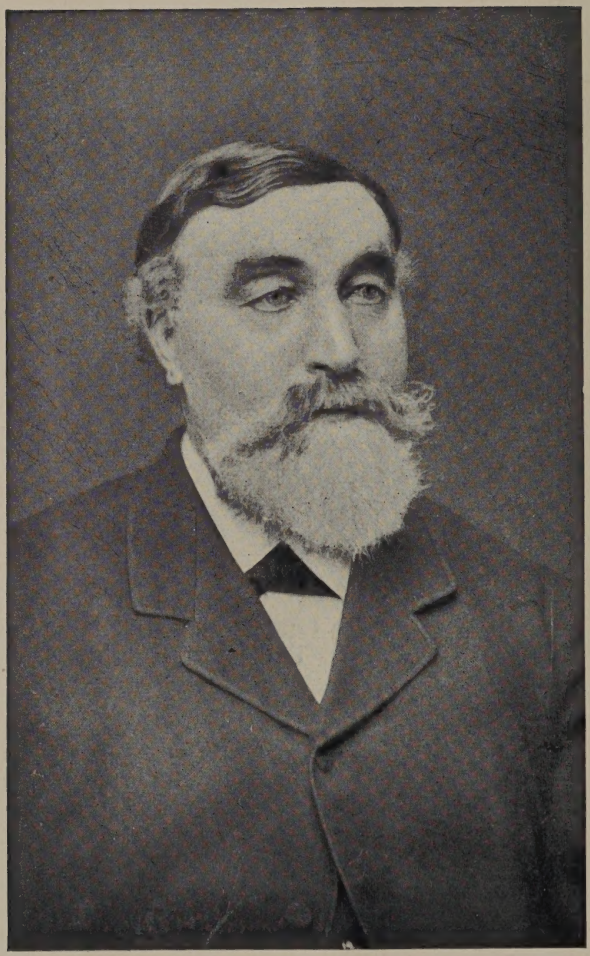
REFERENCE LIBRARY * HOUGHTON MIFFLIN CO. * BOSTON, MASS.
Archive
Collection

This book may not leave the Offices
and if borrowed must be returned within 7 days

THE REMINISCENCES OF A FIDDLE DEALER



Frontispiece]

David Laurie

THE REMINISCENCES OF A FIDDLE DEALER

By DAVID LAURIE

Illustrated

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
1925

Printed in Great Britain
by Fox, Jones & Co., Kemp Hall Press, Oxford, England

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	DAVID LAURIE	... *frontispiece*	
2.	STRADIVARIUS VIOLIN, DATE 1715 ...	... *page*	52
3.	JOSEPH GUARNERIUS VIOLIN, DATE 1740 ...	... ,,	52
4.	THE "CESSOL" STRAD.	... ,,	116
5.	JOSEPH GUARNERIUS DEL JESU, DATE 1739 ...	... ,,	144
6.	STRADIVARIUS VIOLIN, DATE 1696	... ,,	156
7.	BODY OF STRAD. VIOLIN, DATE 1702	... ,,	156
8.	HEAD OF STRAD. VIOLIN, DATE 1702	... ,,	156

Plates 2 and 3 are inserted to show the difference in outline and the "*ff*'s" (sound holes) of the *two* makers and are magnificent examples of each maker.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Many of those who, I fear, are my too partial friends both at home and abroad, have urged me constantly to write these Reminiscences of my dealings, during thirty years, in violins, which may truly be called the highest of stringed instruments.

My friends' reasons for thus urging me are no doubt due to their having heard me recount many anecdotes of these dealings, accompanied by descriptions of the famous people with whom they brought me into contact.

DAVID LAURIE.

CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION xiii

CHAPTER I

MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH FIDDLES

The violin and its position in Scotland in my early days —Its wonderful appeal to me—Life at a Scottish "Ferm Town"—Two gallant fiddlers—The family heirloom—A fiddle and bow, not forgetting the green bag—"Cremona!"—Lessons in playing the fiddle 1

CHAPTER II

THE ITALIAN TONE

I make good progress in playing and remove to Glasgow —I hear Vieuxtemps at a concert—His "Joseph Guarnerius"—My ignorance about violins—A Glasgow fiddle-maker—The greatest expert on violins in Scotland—The "Ailsa Craig"—My first sight of a Strad. 7

CHAPTER III

M. JANSEN'S 'CELLO

I go abroad—N. F. Vuillaume at Brussels—An Amati 'cello—A labour of love—Barak Norman and other English violin makers 15

CHAPTER IV

AN UNPROMISING PURCHASE

A consignment of Italian instruments from Milan—Their primitive condition—My troubles with them—My lesson from them, and their sale—Italy's lack of Italian fiddles 22

Contents

PAGE

CHAPTER V

TWO CELEBRATED 'CELLOISTS, FATHER AND SON

An eccentric celebrity—A disappointing Strad.—M. Servais *fils* and his rest pin—His death while on a visit to a Prince—A record sale—Reducing the size of a Strad.—A king of repairers . 26

CHAPTER VI

PURCHASE AND SALE OF A STRAD. 'CELLO

A faithful workman—I acquire a Strad.—Dealer No. 1 and Dealer No. 2.—Regret at parting with a fine instrument 30

CHAPTER VII

WHO WAS THE MAKER?

A visit in the dark—A mysterious treasure—I cannot solve the problem—The aim of a life—An enormous price—A terrible shock—A high standard of honour—Years afterwards—A problem still 35

CHAPTER VIII

THE FAMOUS VUILLAUME

J. B. Vuillaume—His personality—His family—M. Alard, his son-in-law—Vuillaume's sources of income—His château in the Rue des Ternes—His receptions—His varnish—M. Jansen's 'cello again 45

CHAPTER IX

A MASTERPIECE BY VUILLAUME

That wonderful varnish—A copy of Paganini's Guarnerius—Vuillaume's method—The "Joseph" tone—Strad. violins of the great period . . 50

Contents

PAGE

CHAPTER X

PAGANINI

A mysterious personality—Seeking information—M. Alard—Playing duets with the great man—A series of concerts—The programme abandoned—A triumph—Paganini's broken bow—An absurd rumour—The magic wand—The reception of a gift—Jealousy 54

CHAPTER XI

PAGANINI'S PUPIL

Sivori—Lessons with the Master—A poor little martyr—A marvellous mastery of his instrument—Sivori's perseverance—His peculiarities—His Bergonzi and his Vuillaume—A surprising test—The Paganini copy—A description—Sivori's Hungarian adventure—A diligent repairer—Paganini's violin—A violinist at Genoa—A pardonable stratagem . . 60

CHAPTER XII

THE PRINCE AND THE MARQUIS

De Beriot's "Maggini"—The purchase of a violin—A unique instrument—Joachim—Present-day methods of playing—Result of playing a large Maggini—Peculiarities of tone—King George IV's violin—Avoided by the dealers—Extraordinary new condition—A higher price—M. Leonard's verdict—I sell and re-sell the Maggini 73

CHAPTER XIII

A PURCHASE IN ST. PETERSBURG

A trip to St. Petersburg in 1876—A "Montaignaux" and a "Petrus Guarnerius"—Keeping up their reputation—A fine collection—Courtesy and kindness—Russian artisans—A naval officer—Otto's book on fiddles—A very original idea—

Contents

PAGE

A fine "Guadagnini"—Difficulties of transport—Russian officials—At the last moment—A reserved carriage—The kindest of strangers—At the frontier station—A problem solved in an odd way—Diplomatic hospitality—A rough crossing—The last lap—All that was left—The unkindest cut of all 84

CHAPTER XIV

VIEUXTEMPS— THE CELEBRATED VIRTUOSO

M. Jansen's musical afternoons—The playing of the quartette—An amazing difference—The secret out—The "Cessol" Strad.—A rival—The tragedy of Vieuxtemps—An unknown Strad.—A wager won—Hopes and fears—Death of M. Jansen—A wish fulfilled—An enormous price—A genuine "Carlo Bergonzi"—A German artiste—Trying to sell the 'Cessol' 109

CHAPTER XV

A STRAD. STORY

The finest Strad. in Paris—The visiting card of M. Sameledis—No trace of the Strad.—The work of an old hand—The travels of a violin—Paying court—Mine at last 121

CHAPTER XVI

A VISIT TO CREMONA

The descendants of Stradivarius—Preparing his own tombstone—A "Francesco Ruggeri"—Bargaining with an old lady—A feeble link with the grand old makers 130

CHAPTER XVII

FAME BROUGHT BY A STRAD.

How to become an expert—The "Ernst" Strad.—A ridiculous price—A bad reputation—A deter-

Contents

PAGE

mination—An experiment—The player and the two violins—Violins and *mal-de-mer*—The right player at last—My judgment vindicated—Lady Hallé 135

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WAY TO TREAT A VIOLIN

Lady Hallé's care of her violin—A great contrast—A splendid "Joseph Guarnerius"—Another German artiste—A cold reception—Great alterations—A change of front—A gallant repairer—The property of the late M. Carrodus—A piece of advice 143

CHAPTER XIX

THE TWO FRENCHMEN AND THE VIOLIN

An amusing case—Always changing—A "Gasper da Salo"—The effect of a desire fulfilled—An irate correspondence—The termination of a friendship 150

CHAPTER XX

AMATEUR FIDDLE MAKERS

A favourite hobby of the working man—I am appointed a judge of violins—A pleasant result—A long interview—The better model—A very great favour—The kind of amateur makers who are likely to succeed 154

CHAPTER XXI

ANOTHER STRAD. STORY

Honesty and trustfulness of certain working folk—Trying to get on the track—The owner absent—In a tenement house—A large party of onlookers—The greatest fright I ever had—A faithless guardian—The reason why so many old violins survive 159

Contents

PAGE

CHAPTER XXII

THE LAST EFFORT OF STRADIVARIUS

His great period—An incomprehensible change—A quartette of instruments for the Grand Duke—A friendly dealer—A *chef d'œuvre*—An extraordinary story—The missing link—The "Chant de Cygne" 164

INDEX 173

INTRODUCTION

BY ELSIE M. LANG.

The author of the following Reminiscences was born at Netherton, Kinross-shire, Scotland, in 1833 and was an only son. He was married at Stirling in 1855 and had six children by this union. After the death of his wife in June 1864 he married a second time in April 1865 at Rothesay and had twelve more children.

He was quite a young man when he came to Glasgow and started business as an oil merchant, but although he earned a good livelihood he quickly found his hobby of fiddle-hunting much more interesting, if less profitable. The hobby became the business and the oil merchanting went by the board.

He played first violin as an accomplished amateur and nothing gave him more pleasure than to take the violin part in one of Beethoven's sonatas when a capable pianist was available. Scottish songs—"John Anderson my jo," "The Land o' the Leal" and many others he rendered with charming effect, the tone he produced being wonderfully full and pure, and as he was a tall, well-set-up man, his presence was imposing. He had, of course, always a good instrument upon which to play and for many years was so fortunate

as to have in his possession the " Alard " Strad. and the " King " Joseph Guarnerius. He did not reckon he could play at all except for his own amusement, and nothing would induce him to put a bow across an instrument in the presence of an artiste. For Lady Hallé's powers he had a profound admiration, always maintaining that she had done more than any other artiste to educate the public, particularly in Scotland, in all that is finest in the realm of music.

Mr. Laurie was an indulgent father and great as his love for violins was, his love of children was greater. He would play bright little dance tunes to them for hours at a stretch, and when they had gone off for the night he could find time to carve out with his penknife a 'cute little boat or other toy in fine white pine for their further joy.

His business was conducted from his house—36 Lansdowne Crescent, Glasgow—although London would have been a much more convenient centre for him, if only for its proximity to the continent, but he considered Glasgow's educational facilities and business openings for his family were better than those of London.

Following a long illness that neither Parisian nor English specialists could do anything to relieve, he died in 1897 at Brussels, the town where he had spent so many happy hours among fiddles and fiddlers.

Mr. Laurie had contemplated issuing these

Reminiscences at the time they were written, but his illness put a stop to the project and the MSS. lay aside unheeded until his son, Robert, coming across it among his father's papers, sent it to the publishers who at once realized its interest and value.

The "Alard" Strad. was so called from the famous violinist who formerly owned it. It was one of the finest violins made by Stradivarius and bears the date 1715, thus belonging to his great period, which is considered by connoisseurs to have extended from about 1700 to 1725. The "Alard" was bought in Florence early in the nineteenth century by a banker of Courtrai, in Belgium, and passed at his death into the hands of the late J. B. Vuillaume of Paris, one of the most famous violin makers and experts of the last century. Vuillaume reserved it for his son-in-law, M. Delphin Alard, professor of the violin at the Paris Conservatoire, of European reputation as a virtuoso, in whose possession it remained until he retired from public life in 1876 when it was acquired by Mr. Laurie. It is a Stradivarius of the grand form and of a very handsome model, the arch of the belly and back being of exquisite proportions. The workmanship is between the earlier and later styles of the Master. The neck is original as it left the hands of Stradivarius; it had, however, been lengthened by a piece added at its junction with the upper block of the body. The letters P.S. which are sometimes

found in Strad. violins on the peg-box and at the neck when it is original, are very distinct. These enigmatical letters have given rise to some discussion among experts, but the conclusion appears to be that they are the initials of Paolo, the youngest son of Stradivarius, through whose hands the instruments may have passed. Paolo was a cloth merchant, not a violin maker, but he succeeded to his father's house after the decease of his brothers.

The "King" Joseph Guarnerius del Gesu was formerly in the celebrated collection formed by the late James Goding, and was sold after his death in 1857 to the Vicomte de Janze from whom Mr. Laurie obtained it. The head of the "King" is bolder, and less symmetrical than that of the Strad. and is quaintly original, the arching of the belly and back is less marked and the inward curvings on the side are more pronounced.

These instruments are now in the possession of Baron Knoop's family.

At the end of this volume is appended a list of the prices Mr. Laurie obtained for Italian violins and 'cellos between 1876 and 1880. Since the sales recorded, now nearly half a century ago, prices have increased very much. The number of artistes and amateur players is far greater—consider the number of ladies who now play the violin, either first, second or 'cello; not so long ago it was thought to be quite an unsuitable instrument for them—and their value

as solo instruments is more widely recognised.

No record remains of his sales between 1880 and 1897 but his son states that his business greatly increased in that period. He was offered £2,000 for the "Alard" Strad. and refused it, not because he considered this too low a price, but he could not bring himself to part with the instrument. The occasion of the offer was when the late Dr. Joachim reached his fiftieth birthday and a number of his admirers, knowing that he coveted the "Alard" above all other violins, thought £2,000 would assuredly secure it, and give them the pleasure of presenting it to him. In this they were disappointed—they did present him with a fine Strad. but not the "Alard."

Exceptional instruments of course realise exceptional prices—they must be of the grand or best period of their maker and without blemish. If one gets a chance to obtain a genuine well-preserved Italian instrument, it is a very safe investment whatever the price asked. No slump will take place in them, and when the numerous amateurs and artistes in the U.S.A. learn what the tone of a really good Italian fiddle is, their prices will probably further advance. The high tariff on musical instruments going into the States has no doubt hindered the importation of violins.

CHAPTER I

MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH FIDDLES

FIFTY years ago I made my first acquaintance with fiddles, which were not then held in the same esteem by the majority of people in Scotland that we know they are now. In the large towns especially, the fiddle and its players, were alike regarded with disfavour ; and, though no merry-making could be considered a success without them, yet the very people who employed the fiddlers at night, shunned them in the morning. No doubt this was greatly due to the fact that, at that time, the playing of the fiddle was confined to the half-professional, half-artisan class of men, and that to enable them to keep up the vigour of their playing at weddings and other social gatherings stimulants were freely indulged in, with the result that they were quite unfit for work on the following day and spent it hanging about street corners in a half dazed state.

Far different from this was the state of affairs in the rural districts, where the players were usually ploughmen or farmers' sons who played for the love of it and not for a fee. Needless to say their services were in great demand and

they were always sure of a hearty welcome, but although on the occasion of a merrymaking of any kind stimulants were indulged in, yet the thin end of the wedge of teetotalism had been introduced, and the custom of unlimited whisky was fast dying out.

I recollect well the first time I had the opportunity of seeing a fiddle and hearing it played; it seemed to me like the awakening of a new sense, and was ever after an untiring delight.

I lived with my parents in a "Ferm Town" as a farm is called in Fife. It was beautifully situated amidst woods and highly cultivated lands, with burns running at the sides of the hedges, gurgling merrily on their way to the Forth; we were surrounded by the finest scenery in the kingdom of Fife.

As is the case on all farms, hard work and plenty of it was the rule, and it was, therefore, little wonder that, when the day's toil was over, any unusual distraction was hailed with joy.

At the time of which I write there were two young men, who came out from one of the neighbouring towns on fine summer evenings, each with his fiddle and walking along by the side of a wood, they played together. The delight of the folk at their rendering of Scotch tunes was great, and more especially the young lasses whose ears could often hear who was coming long before the players were to be seen. I, then a boy of nine, was wholly carried away by the music, and

the grass did not grow beneath my feet as I flew rather than ran, across the fields to meet them.

It happened that my father, who was dead, had left a fiddle and bow, which hung in a green bag on the kitchen wall. The two young men, coming in one night to rest for a little, caught sight of it and quickly had it down and the fiddle out to see if it was a Cremona. It was the first time I had ever heard that word, but it has remained in my mind ever since. The fiddlers gazed and gazed again, looking for all the world like the picture of the country schoolmaster and his pupil at the moment when the master says: "If once nought is nought, twice it must be something". Certainly, it was an odd old-looking fiddle and had apparently seen hard service, for it was much broken, and had only the remnants of its two back strings on it. Both the young men decided that it was the tone that would tell, the tone of a Cremona being far superior to all others; therefore, the fiddle would require to be strung, and then played on, before they could tell what it was. My mother then enquired what it would cost to get new strings, but, on hearing that it would take two or three shillings, told them they could put it in the bag again as she would spend money on no such fooleries.

The young players tried to shake her decision by telling her that Cremonas sometimes sold for a hundred pounds, and maybe more, but

she could not be moved to buy the strings, telling them that, if any one would give a hundred pounds or the half of it for the fiddle, they could have it and she would put new strings on it then. The rest of the evening was taken up in discussing Cremonas and their prices, greatly to the disappointment of the servant girls and myself who, naturally enough, took no interest in the discussion and would have infinitely preferred more music. The information the young men gave regarding fiddles, although altogether from hearsay, was quite a revelation to these simple folk, and, though some of them were chary of belief, not one said a doubting word. Two or three young lasses made great fun of the amateur experts and kept advising them to go to other Ferm Towns where Jock this and Tam that had a fiddle and it might turn out to be a Cremona and fetch a hundred pounds.

Eventually the strings were got (but who stood the cost I never knew) though probably it was my step-father, who was most indulgent to me, and the young men put them on. After the stringing up, no time was lost in drawing the bow over them and both young men declared the tone to be marvellous, far superior to that of their own fiddles, or of any other they had ever heard ; they were quite sure it was a Cremona and one of the finest.

Great was our delight, and as the news soon spread, we had many anxious enquirers prin-

cipally ploughmen, all eager to see a real Cremona.

I may as well state here that this fiddle, which caused us all so much excitement, turned out to be a home-made one and of very little value, but as it was my first fiddle I treasure it carefully.

Many a happy evening I can call to mind listening to the girls singing Scottish songs with the fiddles' accompaniment, watching them dance reels and strathspeys to the same music, and the pleasure of these nights has never been surpassed for me. To these gatherings of humble folk I owe the great love of music, and more especially Scottish music, which I have had all my life.

All this time, I had been doing my best to master the playing of the fiddle, but without assistance I found it an uphill task. I, therefore, applied to a joiner "body" who was also a fiddler for some assistance and he agreed to give me some lessons. My first lesson was to sit and watch his fingers as he played the "High way to Linton" and then follow him as best I could. As he played entirely by ear and knew nothing about sharps or flats, of course, he could give me no guidance as to the fingering; so that it was not altogether surprising that when I played it I could not recognise the tune.

Though I afterwards improved a little under his tuition, I was not at all satisfied with my playing, and one evening I spent with my teacher made me still more dissatisfied with him.

On the evening in question, he had been engaged along with another violinist to play a marriage party through the town to the Manse; and I, having nothing more pressing on hand, accompanied him.

The fiddlers were to wait at a certain bridge, whither we wended our way. The other fiddler arriving about the same time, the two proceeded to put their fiddles in tune, and after this was accomplished came the grand question—What were they to play? They decided on "The Campbells are coming" for the first tune but on trying it over, it transpired that they did not play it in the same key. As they both played by ear, neither could transpose it to suit the other, so the "Campbells" was abandoned. They then tried several others with the same result, and were still trying, when up came the bridal party. After the fiddlers had toasted the health of the bride, the procession started. Never will I forget the playing of those two fiddles. They played the same tune in a totally different key, each trying to drown the other until my teacher quickened his speed of playing to such a rate that the other, after ineffectual attempts to keep up, had to give in. The marriage party were totally oblivious of the wild discord, so elated were they with having two fiddles instead of one. The prospect of learning to play like my teacher, however, filled me with gloom and I was not sorry to leave him.

CHAPTER II

THE ITALIAN TONE

A SERIOUS accident which befel my step-father, caused us soon after this to migrate to the county town, and when we were settled there, I managed to get my mother's permission to take lessons on the fiddle. Had my step-father not sided with me, and urged my mother to let me go, I am quite convinced she would never have consented. I was very fortunate with my teacher, who was a handloom weaver by trade, a nice gentle-mannered man of very sober and steady habits. Unfortunately, as I said before, the professors at that time had anything but a high reputation and my mother hearing of this, insisted on my taking all the back roads on my way for a lesson, and my fiddle in its green case had to be put beneath my jacket.

Notwithstanding all these drawbacks I made good progress ; for my new teacher could read music though slowly, and taught me the notes and scales and also the time. His charge was fourpence an hour, but he got so interested in my progress, that the lesson often extended to

two hours and he would take no payment for the extra time. I never, during all the time I went to him, heard him utter a rude or angry word, though I am sure I must often have tried his patience sorely.

My next move was to Glasgow and here a new era opened for me in the pursuit of my favourite hobby. I, along with another devoted companion, attended all the concerts in the City hall whenever any great violinist was to play; and the first I heard was Vieuxtemps. He played a Joseph Guarnerius del Jesu and the tone he produced did not appear to me to resemble that of any other violin I had heard, the only similarity being that it was a violin and not any other instrument. Vieuxtemps was broad-chested though low of stature and was gifted with powerful muscles. His fingers were short, and thick, and long practice had so developed their power, that their plump on the strings was audible at a considerable distance. But the tone of the violin was what appealed to me, and that tone I set myself to find, thinking, in my ignorance, that if I only searched long enough I would be sure to find it in some good fiddle, quite regardless of the maker. Indeed at that time, like many other ignorant amateurs, I thought that a maker's name on a fiddle was only used to get a higher price for it than would be obtained without one. This delusion, which arose out of my ignorance, was a serious stumbling block to me at first,

but I got it completely and unexpectedly upset.

Having made up my mind that I must have that tone I spared no trouble in hunting for it. Of all people on earth who have a fad for anything, none are endowed with the same tenacity in following it up, as amateur players on the violin. Their ordinary avocations may come or go, but at no time is their hobby neglected.

Needless to say all my friends knew of my fiddle hobby, and one of the best of them—my employer—knowing my craze, determined to present me with one of the best fiddles that could be got. He applied to a maker and repairer to aid him in this, a Mr. John Eadie, who lived in a small village outside Glasgow, but he had nothing suitable on hand. Mr. Eadie, therefore, took me up one evening to the house of a gentleman in Glasgow, who was one of the most enthusiastic collectors of fiddles and pictures in Scotland, or indeed anywhere else. This was Mr. John King Clark of loving memory, a most kindly and lovable man to all who had the great privilege of his friendship or even acquaintance. It was my first introduction to this gentleman but the acquaintance soon ripened into a friendship which lasted till the end of his life. He was, at the time, regarded as the greatest expert on violins in Scotland and certainly if quantity of stock had anything to do with it, he had full claim to the title.

Mr. Eadie explained matters to him and suggested that I might get the loan of one of his violins until he (Mr. Eadie) could procure a suitable one. To this Mr. Clark at once consented, and we were taken into a large room in which fiddles were scattered broadcast; on centre and side tables, on sofas and chairs—and these were not sufficient, our host disappeared every now and then into an adjoining room, from which he brought more.

What surprised me more than anything was that he could give a name to each one about which we enquired; not exactly the name of the maker, which was often dubious, but to the different qualitities of tone on which he laid great stress. These he described variously as a "sympathetic," an "irony," a "sugary," and a "singing" tone. Amongst others, he shewed me a violin called the "Ailsa Craig," whose tone was said to have been heard on the rock of that name, in the Firth of Clyde, when the instrument was played on the mainland of Scotland, the nearest point of which was a good twenty miles distant. For the truth of this statement I cannot vouch, but we have learnt a great deal about the capacity of water for carrying sound since that time, more than half a century ago, so it may have been quite true.

Well, I tried over so many instruments that I was quite bewildered, and at the end was just as unable to decide on one as when I entered;

so I put the last one I had tried on a table and sat down. Whilst looking round me I asked Mr. Eadie (Mr. Clark being out of the room) if any, and how many, were Cremonas. "Not one," said he. "How can you tell," I asked, "you have only heard the tones of a few of them." "Tone!" said he, "that has nothing to do with the maker." "No?" I said. "And what has?" "Oh! the make and the varnish," he replied. "And what are these like," was my next query. "That would take a week to explain," he said. "And do *you* know them when you see them yourself," I asked. Mr. Eadie was highly amused and said, "Why you might as well ask me if I know a white man from a black one. Of course I do." As a matter of fact, he had never seen any Italian instruments, and, naturally, his actual knowledge amounted to very little. He had, however, a firm conviction that Nature had bestowed the innate knowledge on him at his birth, and felt he was telling me the truth in what he had said. Just at that moment, my roving eye caught sight of a fiddle which I had not noticed before. It was standing in a corner of the room with its back towards us and as I had the owner's permission to examine and play any of the instruments I cared to try, I rose and took this one in my hand. I was delighted with its beautiful appearance, which excelled all others I had seen, and after a long look of admiration, I took up the bow and tried

its tone. If its appearance had delighted me, its tone sent me into raptures. Words cannot express my feelings, my intense enjoyment, at hearing from it the tone for which I had so long and earnestly sought. I had indeed travelled miles, going wherever I heard a good violin was to be found, but without success till now.

That the reader may know how this violin impressed me, I will describe it, although it is now more than thirty years since I saw it.

It was a small violin rather long in proportion to its breadth ; the back was in two pieces of maplewood beautifully marked with small curls, *ondes* the French call them, the rims and head being similar. The table was made of lovely soft-looking pine called silvery pine, with narrow reeds in the centre, which widened as they reached the sides ; but more so on the treble side than on the bass, which was a common thing in such early violins. It was well covered with a beautiful yellow-brown varnish, clear and transparent, apparently of considerable depth, although not so in fact. This coating gave to both kinds of wood—maple and pine—a fine silky look, the sheen of which changed at every turn of the hand. The head struck me as being rather large and masculine for such a small and fragile-looking body, but this I understood later to be a well-known characteristic of the maker.

I asked Mr. Eadie several times what it was and at last he replied gruffly, " A vamped-up

French fiddle that Mr. Clark will put an Italian name to if you ask him." Ask him I did, and he said it was the long Strad. of Mr. Thompson, for which he had that day offered a hundred pounds, but Mr. Thompson refused it. "Then he was the bigger fool," quoth Mr. Eadie, wrathfully, "and your best friend," he added, "not to take your daft offer seriously." "Is this then really a genuine Stradivarius violin," I asked. "Undoubtedly," said Mr. Clark, "and a well-known one, too."

I was convinced of two things by this discovery. First, that I could recognise the Cremona tone, even when heard in widely different places, such as a crowded concert hall and a private room. Second, that I utterly failed in my playing to produce the peculiar ping which I had so admired in the playing of Vieuxtemps. The explanation of this was, of course, that he could play and I could not, as playing the violin had been his life study, while I, like most amateurs, only practised in leisure moments.

I could not hope to possess a Strad. yet, and Mr. Eadie looked out for a violin which he thought would suit me and finally got one which, he said, was "far beyond yon silly thing you were in such a state about at Clark's." Though I could not quite agree with him, I was highly pleased with the one he got and appreciated greatly the kindness of heart which prompted my master to give it to me.

For many a long day this violin gave me great pleasure.

Through this little experience I was thoroughly disillusioned of my belief that the particular tone I longed for, would be found in any instrument nameless or otherwise, and I, therefore, gave up the search though I was still glad to see fiddles of all *genres*. But in 1867 a change occurred in my occupation, through which I got greater facilities for seeing stringed instruments of the highest class than I could possibly have had at that time in Great Britain.

CHAPTER III

M. JANSEN'S 'CELLO

My new business was to open up markets abroad, and to do this, I had to visit many towns both large and small in different countries. I had plenty of leisure to seek for my favourite instrument, as well as to make the acquaintance of all the modern makers and dealers in the towns I visited. Among others, I frequently came into contact with N. F. Vuillaume, who was a younger brother of the celebrated J. B. Vuillaume and at that time established in Brussels. He had been appointed Violin Maker to the Conservatoire of Music by the Home Minister and this appointment of a foreigner showed how much his abilities were appreciated; although naturally the native makers—while admitting his superiority—resented it. Mons. N. F. Vuillaume was of middle height, broad and well made, and had more the appearance of a Lowland Scot than a Frenchman, although French he undoubtedly was, having been born at Mirecourt, a town in the Vosges. He was very fond of travelling and was especially anxious to re-visit London where he had been twice. On both occasions he had

suffered dreadfully from *mal-de-mer* and nothing would induce him to face the crossing again. Unlike many of his countrymen, he had a great liking for English folks and customs ; his most ardent admiration was, however, given to the policemen and bus drivers. He was amazed alike at their kindness to strangers and their calmness in the most crowded thoroughfare.

M. Darche, a friend who accompanied him on his travels, like many other Frenchmen I have met, laboured under the delusion that the Tower of London was really the abode of the English Kings and Queens and that her present Majesty lived there, although for the sake of variety she moved about among her other palaces.

M. Vuillaume had in his possession at this time, the remnants of an Italian 'cello, which had here and there painted on it in gold parts of words and armorial bearings. These he ascribed to the chapel of Charles IX of France, and thought that the 'cello had been made to order by one of the Amatis.

It was terribly broken up when he got it, but he found all the original pieces and had the patience to restore it. This was certainly a labour of love ; for the pieces numbered hundreds and they were so well inserted, that, at the first glance, the 'cello seemed quite sound, even to an experienced eye. Till the end of his life he asserted that its proper place was the " Tour de Londres " though his brother and others made

fun of him. N. F. Vuillaume's sister kept house for him and, as they did not require all their rooms, they let their first floor to a gentleman, who was a most delightful player on the 'cello. So fine was his playing that I thought for some time that he must be an artiste ; and this idea was strengthened by the number of professional men I used to see calling on him, including professors of the Conservatoire.

I asked M. Vuillaume if this was the case, but he said, No, he was only an amateur, and if I liked he would take me to his rooms and give me an introduction to him. I said it would be a great pleasure to me to make his acquaintance, and we went to his rooms and I was introduced. His name was M. Jansen and he was a fine specimen of a Flemish gentleman, both tall and broad. He was between sixty and seventy years of age, thoroughly intelligent and polite, and his life was entirely devoted to music. He generally accompanied his landlord, M. Vuillaume, when he took the journey to Italy through Germany, and back via Savoy and France to Paris, where they usually spent a few days with J. B. Vuillaume.

M. Jansen received me cordially, and kindly shewed me his violins, a Strad. and a Bergonzi. He also shewed me his 'cello, which was a very fine one of its class. As my wont was, I looked through an *f* to see the ticket, but M. Jansen said it had none. Both N. F. Vuillaume and

his brother, J. B. Vuillaume, in Paris agreed that it was an Italian instrument of the Amati School, and, of course, M. Jansen was quite satisfied with their verdict.

I looked at it again, examining its varnish and details, which did not seem to me to be Italian. I also noticed that on the table below the finger board, there was an ornamental circle cut in the wood but not through it. I had seen in London, two instruments with this same circle on the table, whose tickets bore the name of Barak Norman, and in this ornamented circle his initials were wrought in purfling. He was an old English maker and the London dealer in whose shop I had seen them assured me that they were perfectly genuine and fine specimens of the maker. This 'cello of M. Jansen's was similar in all particulars and with some little hesitation I mentioned having seen these two other instruments, and drew his attention to the circle with the initials in it. M. Jansen seemed rather put out at my remarks, though I did not assert that his was by the same maker, but suggested that possibly the English maker had copied his or some other Italian instrument. One thing was clear to me and that was that all three instruments had been made on a similar model. I passed the matter off, however, and came away. M. Jansen accompanied me downstairs and there told M. Vuillaume what I had said, but he only smiled and said that " whoever made that 'cello, it

was not an Englishman, and there could be no doubt that it was Italian." But even this assurance did not restore its owner's equanimity, as, strange to say, neither he nor the brothers Vuillaume had ever noticed the circle on the table. I left Brussels shortly afterwards but was there again a month or two later, when I called on M. Vuillaume. He received me with a great amount of deference and immediately summoned M. Jansen, who was also most deferential. I was very much surprised, but they soon explained matters to me. It seemed that M. Jansen could not get my remarks on his 'cello out of his mind, and, in the hope of getting a clue as to its maker, he thoroughly overhauled its case. In one of the pockets he found a receipt from a London dealer to its previous owner in which it was referred to as a genuine Barak Norman 'cello.

So M. Jansen made much of me and gave me a most hearty invitation to come at any time I was in Brussels to his musical reunions; an invitation of which I was not slow to take advantage and I had the pleasure of meeting there many distinguished artistes.

The fact that two such good judges could make a mistake with an instrument so characteristic of its maker will no doubt surprise many people in this country. It will surprise them more, however, to learn that the English school of makers was almost unknown abroad at the time to which I refer. No doubt the Vuillaumes,

Gand, Chanot and others knew that certain Italian and French makers had gone to London and wrought there, among whom were Panorma, Fendt and Macautel, but these they did not, of course, regard as English makers and their productions were well known. Not one of them knew or would admit that there were good English makers both before and contemporary with these foreigners. As an illustration of this I will mention another incident which occurred only seven or eight years ago. When I was calling one day on the largest firm in Paris, a gentleman passed me on his way out as I was going in. On the counter lay a tenor which one of the partners lifted and handed to me remarking as he did so that they had just sold it to the gentleman I had passed, as a fine specimen of the Italian school after Amati. He asked if that was also my opinion. "No," I said, "it is English." "English," said he. "Never!" I assured them that it was and the name of the maker was Banks of Shrewsbury, a man famous for all his instruments and his tenors especially. They could not understand the name as I pronounced it, and I wrote it down, when one of them immediately opened a drawer and taking out of it Hart's book asked if I would turn it up. I did so, and at the same time pointed out the long list of English makers. He and his partner admitted their mistake and asked what was to be done. They had their customer's address at

the Grand Hotel, to which they were to send the instrument; and after considering the matter they decided to write an explanatory note. This they did, saying that since they had sold him the fiddle, a large English dealer had called, in whose opinion they had entire confidence, and he had pronounced it to be by Banks, an English maker: therefore, although it followed the Amati make, it was not Italian and they held themselves bound in honour to consider the sale cancelled and would refund his money. The gentleman however declined to agree to this saying that he thanked them for their honourable conduct, and he would keep the violin.

CHAPTER IV

AN UNPROMISING PURCHASE

When I began to go abroad in the early 'sixties, there was a great lull in the dealings in Italian instruments and more especially in high class ones. This was no doubt due to a kind of reaction after the boom which had begun at the end of the eighteenth century and continued up to 1840. About that time several men of mark in the violin world died, among them Paganini, and amateurs were considerably discouraged from making fresh acquisitions. Besides this the prevailing vogue for the Stainer and Amati instruments began to undergo a change, but perhaps the greatest cause of all was the loss of several large collectors whose places were not filled for many years.

Needless to say I only discovered these facts after I began to import instruments into this country; indeed my first trial at importation very nearly became my last. It happened in this way. Calling one day on Mons. N. F. Vuillaume in Brussels, I found him ruefully examining some violins which he had just unpacked from a large wooden case bearing railway labels of various

countries outside. When he had gone over the lot he gave a disappointed grunt, remarking that it would take more time to put them in order than the whole lot of them were worth. "Here, Mr. Laurie," he said, "you may have them if you choose. They are half-a-dozen Italian fiddles sent me from Milan, the man who sent them has collected for me a long time but latterly there are few to be found, and these are merely the débris that he has picked up. I have no time to put them in order, but doubtless some English maker would buy them. Here is the bill for the lot, twelve hundred francs (£48), you may have them at that price and do the best you can with them." I sat down and examined them one by one; they were all just as the makers had left them, some without even a fingerboard. None had ever been mounted for use and all had short hands. Three had names on their tickets I had never even heard of, but the other three bore well-known ones, namely,—J. B. Ruggieri of Brescia, Landolphus of Milan, and Gabrielli of Florence, and I thought I would risk it and accept the offer. I brought the fiddles to London and shewed them to three of the principal dealers in Wardour Street. The first had a good look at them, and asked my price for the lot. "Sixty pounds, wholesale," I said quite boldly. "Not if I know it," said he, "why, if they were mine I should be glad to get rid of them for half that sum, but I don't care to have them at all."

After trying the other two dealers with no better success I decided there and then to give up the wholesale method of selling fiddles. I brought them home, packed them carefully in their box and put them into a press where they remained for about six months. At the end of that time I was leaving home to go abroad again and on the day I was starting I remembered the fiddles and got out the case. I took two of them with me, the Ruggieri and Landolphus, and these I left with a maker in a provincial town in France, with instructions to mount them for me and put them in playing order ready for my return in a few weeks' time.

When I called for them I could hardly recognize them for the same fiddles, they were so much improved by their mountings and had altogether such a different appearance. The repairer said he had a buyer for the Ruggieri at £24, but that I refused; the offer was increased to £32, but I would not take it.

I brought both fiddles to London again and sold the Ruggieri for £35, and later on the Landolphus for £20 to one of the dealers to whom I had offered the lot for £60.

The rest of the half dozen I sold at intervals, and through this deal in violins I learnt more than one valuable lesson. The first was never to shew any violin worth more than £5 in its primitive condition to any one, not even a dealer. Another was to exercise the virtue of patience

and not lose heart even when my expectations did not seem likely to be realized, and this has been put to the test many times in the course of my experience.

Of course I had a decided advantage over the dealers at this time, as I had another business and was not depending on the sale of these or any other fiddles. I would not for a moment wish my readers to think that the dealers were chary of buying because they did not see the possible value of the best of the instruments. Far from it; they knew just as well as I did what they were, but they were in such an unfinished state, that it meant a lot of work putting them in order. Besides instruments of that class sold slowly and generally at a low price, so, like Vuillaume, they concluded that the game was not worth the candle.

The dealers too were enabled from their knowledge of fiddles to pick up good bargains at sales, and were offered second and third class Italian fiddles at a very low price by the owners who were forced to sell. All this, however, has been changed these many years. Italian instruments have quite reasserted themselves, though, now, as at the time of which I write, Italy was about the last place where one could purchase them. They were all taken to other countries.

CHAPTER V

TWO CELEBRATED 'CELLOISTS, FATHER AND SON

WHILE attending one of M. Jansen's private concerts, I had the pleasure of meeting M. Servais of Hal, one of the most renowned violoncelloists of the day. This gentleman was about forty when he first made his mark as a player, and though his late start in studying music systematically was against him in some respects, still he had a natural gift and soon won distinction. He had a thoroughly musical nature and had ever the power to stir his audience with his playing. He was also rather eccentric and sometimes caused much mirth among the audience by mounting on a table, 'cello and all, so that his part might be well heard above the orchestra and further making most comical faces which set the audience in a roar. When M. Servais started to study music, he walked once a week into Brussels, a distance of sixteen miles, with his 'cello on his back, in order to get cheap lessons. The 'cello he played at the time I met him was a very large sized Strad. of the early period, and had never been reduced in size as many were, owing to the difficulty men of medium size had in playing them, because Servais, being big and strong, found no difficulty with it.

He was well advanced in years when I made his acquaintance and not very long afterwards he died in the little town of Hal, south of Brussels, where he was born and brought up. His fellow townsmen have honoured him by erecting a fine granite statue to his memory. The figure is life-size, holding a bow in the right hand, while on the left side stands the celebrated large Strad. 'cello.

He was a man greatly liked for his kindness of heart and genial manner to all with whom he came in contact.

One of his sons succeeded him in his position as principal 'celloist in the Brussels Conservatoire of Music, and the first time I heard the Strad. 'cello played was at a grand concert in the Hall of Harmony, when M. Servais *fils* played it. He played in a quartette: Wieniasky taking first fiddle, Collins second, the third I forget, and Servais *fils* fourth. When the 'cello took up the theme in its turn, I was both surprised and disappointed that it had such an inside quality of tone—*tonneaux* or tubby as we would call it. I knew that such a large instrument, having such high arches would have that tone to a slight extent, but did not expect it to be nearly so pronounced. During the interval, between the first and second parts of the programme, I went out and made inquiries, and was not long in discovering the reason.

It seemed that the platform on which the

artistes sat, was practically the lid of a hollow wooden box. M. Servais was in the habit of using a wooden rest pin, which has an injurious effect on the tone of any instrument when placed on a wooden floor, and when, as in this case, there was a hollow space under the flooring, the effect which would have been tubby on any instrument was of course exaggerated in the Strad. 'cello.

Thinking that it might not have occurred to M. Servais to do without his rest pin I went into the artistes' room, where the quartette were, and after some general conversation I introduced the subject. M. Servais, however, had been trained to use the rest pin, as indeed nearly all artistes outside England are, and would not hear of giving it up. I mentioned that Piatti, for whom I knew he, like his father, had a great admiration, had been taught to play without the rest pin and never used it. M. Servais was much interested in hearing this, but said frankly he was so accustomed to it that he simply could not do without it. Of course, the belief is that with the rest pin the volume of tone is greatly increased and without doubt this is so; but it would never make up to me in volume what it takes away from the quality of the tone. My persuasions having no effect, I let the matter rest.

M. Servais was greatly esteemed as a teacher, he was a thoroughly well-grounded and cultivated musician. He had enjoyed many advantages

which his father lacked, and had ability enough to make a great name for himself, had it not been his aversion to travel to other countries. His friends urged him repeatedly to do this, but he delayed until it was too late. He died very suddenly one day while on a visit to the Prince Caraman Chimay. They had had a day's shooting, together and were sitting after dinner when Servais, rising to get his pipe off the mantelpiece, fell to the ground and expired. His sudden death was a terrible blow to his friends and relations.

On the death of M. Servais *fils* the grand 'cello was sold to a banker, who bought it for his son and paid over £3,000 for it. He was anxious to keep the instrument in the country where its merits had been made known by these two great artistes, father and son.

I may here mention that the work of reducing the size of these large Strads. was a most serious and difficult one; the only maker who could do it really well was one named Meningand. Although his own make of new instruments was comparatively poor, for repairing old ones he was a very king, and he had discovered some means whereby he could reduce the size of any instrument without leaving the slightest mark to shew that it had undergone such an operation. Even Vuillaume admitted his superiority in this, and latterly advised any one who wished such a thing done to go to Meningand.

CHAPTER VI

PURCHASE AND SALE OF A STRAD. 'CELLO

THE subject of Strad. 'cellos recalls to my mind an incident which resulted in my purchasing a fine 'cello not quite so large as that of M. Servais but in better condition. My friend, M. N. F. Vuillaume, had removed to a large self-contained house, his old one having been bought by the City of Brussels when they were erecting the new boulevard. His new house was a large one of four flats, but only partly furnished, he himself occupying two rooms while the attics which were cramped and inconvenient, were arranged as workrooms for his man Nicholas. In these attics, between the heat in summer and the intense cold in winter, poor Nicholas put in rather a rough time. I called one afternoon to see M. Vuillaume but he had gone out, and no one knew when he would be back, so I mounted the four flights of stairs to have a chat with Nicholas.

I found him hard at work on a new 'cello; no eye-servant was he, but thoroughly honest and trustworthy, doing his work faithfully for his money. I sat down and examined the instruments that were scattered broadcast, picking

them up one by one to see what they were. "Nothing worth looking at here," said Nicholas, "the Master keeps all the fine instruments downstairs." "You must turn out a lot of 'cellos in a year," said I, "you were generally at work on one when I saw you in the old shop." "Yes," answered Nicholas, "I make a lot and the Master varnishes and mounts them. He has gained a reputation for 'cellos and they are considered by some to have even better tones than those of his brother." "That's surely a large one over there," I said, pointing to one which stood against the wall with its table outwards, "and its *ff*'s are beautifully cut and shaped. You are improving, Nicholas, in your old age; but why did you make it so large and has M. Vuillaume altered the tint of his varnish or has it still to get a coat or two?" He smiled and shook his head, "No, no," he said, "that is not one of our make at all; it is an old French one and looks, I think, like a Nicholas of Paris." I thereupon rose to get a closer look at it. It had only its fingerboard on, no other mounting, which had caused me to think it new at the distance I was from it.

To my great surprise I found it to be a splendid large-sized Strad. of the early period, in good condition, with a coat of yellow-brownish varnish. I said nothing to Nicholas about the maker, but asked if he knew who the owner was. He did not, and we passed on to other topics until I heard M. Vuillaume coming in, when I went downstairs.

"Hallo," he cried, "you have been upstairs seeing Nicholas. Well, is there anything up there that pleases you?" I said, Yes, I had seen a large 'cello with a Strad. ticket in it. "Is it a Strad.?" I asked. M. Vuillaume laughed. "Is it a Strad.?" quoth he, "*farceur* that you are to ask such a question. You! that's a little too much." "Well, then," I said, "we won't quarrel about its name. Is it yours and is it for sale?" "It is not mine," he replied, "and I don't know whether it's for sale or not, but I will go and see the owner and enquire. How much will you give for it?" I named my figure and away he went. In about two hours he returned saying that if I would add his commission, £20, to the price I had named the 'cello was mine. To this I agreed and told him to get it mounted and ready for me on my return journey, which would be in about three weeks' time.

I brought it to London and shewed it to various dealers, one of whom eventually bought it. The first dealer to whom I mentioned it was somewhat distant in manner and complained much of the dull time; he was not even willing to take the trouble to come to my hotel and see it, but kindly suggested that I might bring it to him in a cab. This I firmly and respectfully declined to do. I called on another; he was not gushing either but said he would look me up some time during the evening.

I did some other business before returning to

my hotel and when I got there I found Dealer No. 1 waiting and fuming at my tardiness. I shewed him the instrument and could see from his fault-findings with various petty details that he was in reality highly pleased with it; and well he might be for I knew there was not a better instrument of its class extant. He offered me a hundred pounds below my price, I declined; then fifty, I still refused, and away he went. Dealer No. 2 turned up late in the evening and we played the same comedy over again. Before departing he asked if No. 1 had seen it and I said "Yes"; he hesitated no longer, but concluded the purchase, and took the instrument away.

The next morning No. 1 returned and immediately offered my price. He would hardly believe me when I said the instrument was not only sold but delivered to its purchaser. He found this to be only too true as it turned out they were both after it for the same customer; a gentleman who had mentioned to both of them that if they came across a fine Strad. 'cello they might let him know.

So they were both in the swim, but as generally happens, luck favoured the boldest.

I was very sorry to part with it so soon as I would have liked time to study it more thoroughly in its details, as was my custom with all fine instruments, in order to increase my knowledge. Like all collectors too, I had much pleasure in shewing my treasures to men of like calibre, and

discussing with them the beauties both of workmanship and tone. Many a fine instrument I have kept out of the market for sufficient time to indulge in this pleasure; I never feared the risk of losing its sale by thus doing, knowing as I did from experience that the time and the man would always come.

CHAPTER VII

WHO WAS THE MAKER ?

THIS chapter deals with a rather delicate matter, but as it is sufficiently well known now in Paris, where it occurred, to relate the story of it can harm no one. One day when I was in that town, M. Gand asked me if I would do him a favour any time at my own convenience ; this was to go with him to a house to see and appraise a violin. I fixed on the following day at 11 a.m., and when the time came, we went off together in a cab. On the way M. Gand apologized for not giving me any particulars of the business in hand and carefully kept the conversation on other matters.

After a long drive the cab pulled up at a large house divided into flats ; we mounted to the first floor and entered one of the sets of rooms, where we were received in a very formal and polite manner by a tall, elderly gentleman. After a few minutes he left us and when he came back he had with him a double violin case. Opening it he took out the only violin it contained and handed it to me, remarking that this was the violin on which my opinion was wanted.

I carried it over to the window, sat down and made a long and careful examination of it, the two gentlemen meanwhile talking together in another part of the room. It was a most beautiful and finely preserved violin of splendid workmanship, and was well covered with a light red varnish of great brilliancy and beauty. Its archings were a shade high and the purfling rather near the edges, which were only slightly raised from the table. The woods were of the most choice description and the shape and set of the *ff*'s as well as the details of the head left nothing to be desired. The tone was simply magnificent. I spent such a long time examining it in every point and trying to remember if I had ever seen one like it that I felt obliged to apologize to the gentlemen for keeping them waiting so long. The owner assured me there was no hurry and that he was highly satisfied to see me examining it so thoroughly. After a good half hour I reluctantly rose quite undecided as to the maker. That it was Italian there was no doubt, and that the maker of it must have made many before he could turn out such a one was also beyond dispute. Quite possibly too he had made others after this masterpiece. Where then were these others and who was the great workman ? I could not solve the problem and handed back the violin to M. Gand in silence.

M. Gand asked me if I could name the maker. " No," I said, " I cannot." He next asked me

if I had ever seen another by the same maker or one like it in general style and I replied that I never had. His next suggestion was that it might be an eccentricity of Strad.'s or possibly the work of one of his pupils corrected in certain points by him, but I assured him it was not. "The hand that made that violin," I said, "was a deft one whose work required no correction; and its difference in model from the violins of Strad. shews an independent mind in the artist —for it is a work of art and no slavish copy."

Although my remarks were highly laudatory to the instrument I was much surprised and dismayed to see their effect on the owner. He became quite downcast and despondent and I gathered from his remarks that either his father or M. Gand had led him to believe that the violin was a Strad. Of course I could not understand then how important the matter was to him and shortly after M. Gand and I came away. As we were driving away in the cab M. Gand said that he would now explain the affair to me. The gentleman we had visited was M. Baillot, son of the greatest of all French violinists. He (the son) was a professor of the piano, and like many of his countrymen laid down at an early age rules for the guidance of his life. The principal one was that he should work for so many years during which, by careful saving, he would have sufficient money to yield him a comfortable income if well invested in *rentes*.

He would also keep his father's violin, as he knew from reliable sources, that the prices of fine instruments were steadily rising and would, no doubt, continue to do so. He calculated that by the time he was ready to retire the selling price of his instrument would be quadrupled and with that and his income from his *rentes* he could live in comfort in his retirement. All this was duly carried out and though often pressed to sell the violin he steadily refused to do so until the right time came.

This was now the case, and it was decided that the purchaser should be the son of a titled minister in the Government, who had latterly looked forward eagerly to the time when he should possess the violin. Unfortunately a difficulty arose about the enormous price asked, 30,000 francs (£1,200), which M. Baillot boldly demanded for it. This sum fairly took away the breath of the would-be purchaser, and nearly rendered him speechless. At last he said: "Surely you are joking I never heard of such a price for a violin." But M. Baillot answered that the fiddle was his father's and as such was far beyond all others in value, "besides," he added, "you have said in nearly every letter to me that price was no object." The intending purchaser explained that such a sum had never entered his thoughts and that he had merely used a phrase common enough in France about anything which a person longed to possess. M. Baillot, who was evidently

a very sharp man of business, pinned him down to the oft-repeated phrase, adding that he had told everyone who was to be the purchaser, and no further objections on that score could hold.

The intending purchaser, however, as a next step in the negotiations, made an entirely unexpected demand of M. Baillot. "Very well," said he, "be it so, let 30,000 francs be the price; but you must give me along with the violin a certificate as to its authenticity from the best authority in Paris, and that is M. Gand." "Oh, certainly, if you exact it I will at once get a certificate and send it to you. M. Gand knows the violin well as did his father before him, so he won't require to see it again. You may just take it with you." But this the young man would not do, saying that he preferred everything should be settled before he took possession.

M. Baillot therefore called on M. Gand at the earliest possible moment, not troubling to take the violin with him, and explained what he wanted; but here again he was disappointed. M. Gand said he would give the certificate with pleasure but would like first to see the violin again as it was many years since he had seen it and, as he was only a pupil of M. Baillot *père* at the time, he had not examined it. As a matter of fact he was not then in his present business and had taken very little interest in the make of instruments. On the death of his elder brother, however, he had to give up

his studies and go into the business, and consequently had studied all kinds of instruments and would now be able to judge correctly. As he had taken into partnership the two brothers Bernardel his certificate would commit them as well as himself, and he required to be careful.

M. Baillot went off and brought the violin back with him. "Now," said he, "there will be no more delay—you no doubt recognize it to be a Stradivarius and one of his very best." But that was just what M. Gand did not, and he kept looking at it again but said nothing. Poor M. Baillot was in a terrible agony of suspense at his long silence and M. Gand told me that he really could not tell him it was not a Strad. he was so distressed at the sight of his face. Therefore, along with M. Eugène Bernardel, he retired into the small workshop at the back of the premises where M. Gustave Bernardel sat at work. To them he explained matters adding that he was both surprised and disappointed himself, having always heard it spoken of as a Strad. and a very fine one. He was now quite convinced from his personal examination that it was not a Strad. at all; but the circumstances, under which he was asked to decide, were so peculiar that he felt it would be more satisfactory to all concerned to have the opinion of another expert.

They decided to tell M. Baillot frankly their doubt as to the maker, and suggest the choosing of another expert, and this was done. M. Baillot,

poor man, was speechless on hearing their opinion and indeed the shock must have been terrible. He said he knew no other expert to whom he could appeal and M. Gand then introduced my name as that of a reliable judge and moreover a perfect stranger, who knew nothing whatever about the instrument or its reputation. Any opinion I formed was bound to be quite unbiassed, and could be relied upon. "Yes," said M. Baillot, "but suppose this man, whom you praise so greatly, recognizes it as a Stradivarius what use would that be to me? It would not help the sale a bit, even if it was satisfactory to my feelings, as it was your certificate that was demanded and no other will do." "In that case," said M. Gand, "if Mr. Laurie says it is a Stradivarius and is willing to put in writing the points which lead him to form that opinion, I have no hesitation in saying that we, having such faith in his judgment and honesty, will endorse his statement with the name of our firm. You must take that as a proof that we desire to help you as much as possible in the matter."

Although this was but poor comfort to M. Baillot, after the shattering of his hopes, still it was all he could get and after all, this stranger might come to another conclusion and give a favourable verdict. He therefore took a more hopeful view of the matter and heartily embraced their proposal. M. Gand and his partners acted in the most honourable manner throughout.

Not the slightest whisper had been given me by any of them, as to where I was going nor whom and what I was to see. I felt heartily sorry for M. Baillot as he had built up his hopes on this fiddle.

The fact of it having been always called a Strad. arose from its history which was well known in Paris. A Frenchman bought it, a week after the burial of Stradivarius, from his sons in the very house in Cremona where he had lived ; and it was taken by him to his house in Paris. It remained in his family for three generations and was then given to M. Baillot *père*, as a token of admiration of his playing, by one of the descendants of the original purchaser.

M. Baillot *père* had always referred to it as a Strad. and as there was no reason for submitting it to an expert, the statement was never doubted for a moment.

As is often the case, M. Baillot considered that the best player must be the best judge, and as his father was the best player of his time, of course, his judgment could not go wrong.

Some years afterwards, I received a note from a gentleman on one of my visits to Paris, asking me if I would oblige him by calling at his house at any time that was convenient to me, to appraise his collection of instruments. I made an appointment for a certain day and hour and called. He received me with great kindness, and thanked me for complying so promptly with his request.

As a matter of fact he said there was really only one of his fiddles upon which he was anxious to get my opinion and he knew I had already seen and appraised it. Still he wanted to get an opinion direct from me. I had naturally no idea which violin it would be, having given an opinion on many in Paris after I had become known there. Certainly the last I would have expected to see was M. Baillot's, but so it was, and I was very glad to have the opportunity for another good look at it. Although it was now many years since I had seen it, the memory of that sad incident in connection with it, had often been in my mind and I asked first about M. Baillot. To my surprise I was told that he had died some time before, although M. Gand had never mentioned it to me, which might be due to forgetfulness or more probably a dislike to refer to him again, M. Gand being of a very sensitive nature. M. Baillot never seemed to recover from his disappointment over his violin and it seemed to prey on his mind greatly. Not for the loss of the money, as he had sufficient for his wants, being very frugal in his way of living, but just that his long belief in it had been so rudely dispelled. He never again made the slightest allusion to selling it and its present owner had purchased it from his widow after his death. I made another long and careful inspection of the violin and was as much puzzled as ever as to who was the maker. I had travelled in many countries, and seen

instruments of all kinds but never one that bore the impress of the same hand.

There were certain points of Gofriller's—a Venetian maker—about it, such as its small and neatly laid-in purfling—the flatness of the edges there being no rise either round or angular in them. This point alone shewed that it was neither the work of Strad. nor Guarnerius. The placing of the *ff*'s was different from that of the Gofriller although very good, and the head was weak, but quite in keeping with the *ff*'s. And its size and splendid archings were much superior to those of the Gofriller. Again the *C* or bouts resembled from their deep incision those of Carlo Bergonzi, only their roundness at top and bottom were quite different and more elegant than his. The varnish also was much superior both in colour and quality and although this was undoubtedly true of the Venetian school it did not assist me to solve the problem as to the identity of the maker.

I was relieved to find that the gentleman in whose possession it was, shewed no signs of disappointment nor chagrin at my inability to name the maker; indeed he seemed to take that as a foregone conclusion. He said he had no intention of selling it as its tone was quite as fine as that of many Strad.'s and Guarnerius violins, and that if I wished to see it again at any time or had any friends whom I would like to see it, I was to call and he would be delighted to see me.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FAMOUS VUILLAUME

Some time after I had made the acquaintance of N. F. Vuillaume, I had the pleasure of calling on his brother, J. B. Vuillaume, who was one of the finest modern makers of instruments. There has been a great falling-off of this class of men, indeed they seem almost to have died out of late. At the time when I made J. B. Vuillaume's acquaintance he was sixty-six years old but he still retained all the activity of his prime. A short description of this remarkable man may interest lovers of the violin, as he is usually considered the greatest maker since the days of Strad. He was of medium height and meagre in body, like his great predecessor, Stradivarius ; but he was all muscle, which made him capable of undergoing the greatest fatigue in his favourite occupation, to which head and heart were entirely devoted. He had had an enormous experience in making new instruments and bows in addition to his dealings in those of other makers. As he was the son of poor parents he had had no educational advantages, but his natural intelligence

was very great and made up to a large extent for the deficiency in his up-bringing. He married, early in life, a lady of good education, superior understanding, and highly cultivated manners, and she still further improved him. She had too a *dot* sufficient to enable them to start in business in Paris and they prospered steadily.

Their family consisted of two daughters, one of whom became the wife of M. d'Alard, Professor of the violin in the Conservatoire of Music, Paris; he became the principal teacher of the violin there, and was considered for many years before his retirement to be the best violinist in Paris. The other daughter married a gentleman in Messrs. Rothschild's bank, one M. Veuve Metalier. M. and Mme. Vuillaume worked hard, as is the custom in France, that they might be able to leave a fortune to their daughters. The fortune left by them, however, was not by any means gained entirely by his manufacture of instruments, helped as that was by his dealings in others of much higher value. It was due largely to his purchasing during panics and semi-revolutions in Paris, properties, both tenements and cleared pieces of land. Out of these he, of course, made good profit when the panics had subsided.

The place where he latterly lived and worked was bought by him at such a time. It was situated in the rue des Ternes and consisted of a two-storied *château* with the usual outer buildings, stables and coach-house, also a small dwelling

house for the *concierge*, close to the outer gate. It had a large garden of about one and a half acres which in its former state had been well stocked with vegetables, fruit trees, flowers, and shrubs. From the large windows of the *château* there was a very pleasant view of the old garden which still retained some small ornamental trees of a size similar to those in the Tuileries, and between the trees were clusters of flowers carefully kept. But on turning the corner to the right there were flowers of a different sort to be seen.

A small glass-panelled green-house stood at the extreme end of this side of the garden and it was used for a storehouse; here were string instruments in all conditions, varnished, half-varnished, with no varnish at all, and some that were only just begun. This green-house was also used by Vuillaume for the edification and entertainment of the visitors who came on Thursdays, the day he set apart for the reception of his many admirers. Here they might view him at work, as, attired in his working blouse, he stood, a fiddle in one hand, a brush in the other and a pot of varnish on the bench. At the other end of the bench were bottles filled with varnish for sale and he would dip into his pot of varnish and one of the bottles alternately, as he varnished the fiddle before their admiring eyes. This was done in order to shew the similarity of the varnish in the pot and bottle.

There were, of course, many, both professional and amateur makers, at these receptions, every one of whom anxiously desired to get the same varnish as the great maker used, and the bottles were sold out rapidly and their purchasers departed full of joy. It was on a reception day that I first called on him, and, of course, followed others straight to the green-house, where I waited my turn for a short interview, listening to the enthusiastic remarks of some of his admirers.

Thinking he must be rather fatigued with his afternoon's work I intended to cut my interview short and as I had no introduction from any one I merely handed him my card. To my surprise, after reading it, he greeted me with the greatest heartiness and asked if I could wait till the reception was over. I accordingly remained and he told me that his brother in Brussels had often mentioned my name as an *amateur enragé* and, he courteously added, *grand connoisseur*, but this I would not have and strongly protested my unworthiness of such a title. No more was said of the subject at the time and as the reception was over, M. Vuillaume asked me to carry as many fiddles as I could to the house, he doing likewise.

Arrived at the house we took them to his real varnishing and finishing rooms, which were in the attics above the first floor of the *château* and were lighted by large bow windows in the roof. Here, to my astonishment, he carefully removed

from the fiddles he had varnished in the greenhouse, every drop of varnish he had put on, and at last I asked him why he did this. He laughed uproariously at my amazed looks, and said that, while the varnish he sold was good varnish and would make a fine job of a fiddle if put on according to the directions given, it could hardly be expected that he would give away his own varnish. I thought to myself that his customers when they used this summer-house varnish must have been greatly astonished at the result as it was as little like Vuillaume's varnish as their fiddles were like his, I suppose, in workmanship.

M. Vuillaume invited me to stay and dine with them and, having no other engagement, I did so. During dinner he again, in answer to some remark I made, repeated his compliment by calling me a *grand connoisseur*. This I begged him not to do as he gave me credit for greater abilities than I possessed, and I told him that I was both ready and willing to learn of any who would take the trouble to teach me. "My friend," he said, "you are much too modest, I know all about your remarks on the violoncello of M. Jansen of Brussels, which I, as well as my brother, said was Italian of the Amati school. You said it was by an English maker and you were proved correct." Thus was honour thrust upon me and almost a reputation made through a very trivial incident that I had quite forgotten.

CHAPTER IX

A MASTERPIECE BY VUILLAUME

It was not long before the acquaintance thus formed, ripened into friendship, and many an interesting discussion we had together. M. Vuillaume who was quite as *enragé* on the subject of fiddles as I, was quite delighted to meet a kindred spirit. Among other things we discussed was this same varnish of his. It was more like a paint than a varnish, very delicate and easily peeled, when exposed even to a mild heat. I have seen it curl up like brown paper when near, although not really close to, a fire. Now and then he had a superior quality which was only used on special instruments and this was generally, although not invariably, magnificent in its suppleness, purity, and colour. It had no resemblance to that which he ordinarily used, being a *decided* varnish and very like that on some of the best of the beautiful Petrus Guarnerius instruments. I have seen a similar varnish on a few of the violins of J. B. Ruggieri of Brescia, most of which had no purfling, not even an imitation purfling made by a pen on their backs.

With one solitary exception, I never saw in the house of Vuillaume any instruments with this special varnish, but I have seen them in the possession of amateurs who always admitted having paid an extra price for them.

As I was in the habit of buying a good many violins from him at this time, in fact as many as he could give me, his orders from all countries for violins keeping him constantly employed, I often asked him to make me similar ones. He readily undertook to do so, but although I was quite willing as he well knew to pay any extra price for them, I never got more than the one referred to above from him.

He always declared that his success with them was more or less accidental; this might quite well be the case, but the difference in the quality of the two coverings was not accidental. When I cornered him with this remark, he got out of it by quoting violins of the Italian makers, which differed as much and even more than his. Not caring to argue the point with him I kept silent though I was by no means convinced.

On one of my visits I asked M. Vuillaume if he would make me a copy of Paganini's Guarnerius, which he readily consented to do, and on my return some months later he handed it to me with this written below the ticket "*Pour mon ami* M. David Laurie." It was simply one of his masterpieces, nothing more need be said about it. But whilst speaking of his copies of violins

I may clear the mist that envelops them. The story of his copying the Paganini Guarnerius is well known ; his sending it to Nice just on the death of the great virtuoso and its return to Paris and its eventual acquisition by Sivori, Paganini's only pupil. But the truth is that it, as well as the one he made for me and all his other copies, were certainly not *copies* in the real sense of the word either of Paganini's or any other known Guarnerius del Jesu violin extant.

Vuillaume seems to have made violins not only with certain of the well-known characteristics of the Guarnerius, but also to have introduced characteristics of his own invention as if to shew what Guarnerius should have done. For example, nearly all the violins which Joseph Guarnerius made from 1725 to 1740—his best period—were smaller than those he made from 1740 to 1745, the year of his death. Notwithstanding their small size, there was no deficiency in the quality of their tone, although the copies made of them by modern makers were greatly inferior in that respect. In Vuillaume's opinion, it was a waste of valuable time and fine material to continue exactly on these lines. Taking for his standpoint the fact that in making copies of Strad.'s he got his best results by keeping to the measurements of Strad.'s great period in which his violins seldom exceeded 14 in. in length and $6\frac{1}{2}$ in. $\times$ $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. $\times$ $8\frac{1}{8}$ in. or $\frac{1}{4}$ in. in breadth, and finding that with those measurements the tone—

Plate 2]

Stradivarius Violin. Date 1715

Plate 31

Joseph Guarnerius Violin. Date 1740

other things being equal—could be depended upon, he decided to make his Josephs of the same size.

The outline of course was of the Joseph type, that is rounder at the extreme ends than the Strad. and the *ff*'s were not so deeply cut into the body and were rounder at both ends. The *ff*'s were $3\frac{1}{4}$ in. long, of the Joseph shape, with sharp turns at head and foot, the heads of the *ff*'s were closer together than in a Strad. and the heavier head was more negligently finished. The arches of the back and table were usually flatter but the height of the rims was similar. The greatest difference between his copies of Strad. and Guarnerius lay not in what the eye saw but in what the ear heard, namely the tone. His idea of a Joseph tone being that it was a much more inside tone, especially on the back strings, than a Strad., he produced this effect by the simple process of thinning the wood at both back and table. Even in this particular tone there were degrees caused by the difference in the qualities of wood which he employed, although it might be cut from the same tree. This fact shewed that he, like his less gifted contemporaries, failed sometimes in his judgment, as to which parts of pine and maple best suited each other for bringing out tone.

CHAPTER X

PAGANINI

It is to me, as no doubt to hundreds of others, inexplicable why so little is known concerning the habits and personality of the heaven-born musician, Paganini, even to people who came into close contact with him. That his wonderful music should be beyond our comprehension, is not strange as he produced music far beyond the knowledge of the age in which he lived and there is no doubt that he was a pioneer in developing the powers and beauties of the violin. Yet in spite of the fact that he was constantly surrounded by admirers of every degree, all eager to find out something of his personality and mode of life, nothing of any moment regarding him was ever learnt. No one even knew when he studied and rehearsed his wonderful music, of which only a part was jotted down on paper.

I am sorry to say I never heard him play, never even saw him, but I missed no opportunity of gaining information about him, applying to everyone I thought might be able to help me. I applied particularly to Vuillaume, whose shop

he visited now and again, on which occasions Vuillaume was not backward in asking questions although always in a most polite manner. He, however, gained nothing by his questions and could give me no information but referred me to his son-in-law M. Alard who had ability enough to play duets with Paganini. Naturally this brought him into very close contact with the great player, yet he could tell me less regarding his personality than any other man. They never rehearsed together, and in fact he did not believe that Paganini ever looked at the duets until he came on the platform to play them. His reason for saying this was that, although he called on him at various times, at his hotel, he never once heard him play a note off the platform.

But he did tell me, laying great stress on the fact, that Paganini made very little impression when playing the compositions of other men either in duets or alone. His tone was rather fine and although perfect in quality, it lacked the breadth of other artistes such as Lafont, even when playing the same compositions. M. Alard never omitted to add, that in his opinion this was because the compositions of other men were not good enough for him to play. I asked him why, if that were the case, did Paganini play them at all, and he explained the reason. It seemed that the *entrepreneurs* who had engaged him to come to Paris found themselves in rather a fix. The Parisians had only been accustomed

to hear concerted instrumental music and now and again a solo by some great violinist with orchestral accompaniment. Solos unaccompanied they found would not draw no matter by whom they were performed; it was therefore, arranged that concerted pieces should be played with Paganini as first violin. All these pieces had to be abandoned, however, as when Paganini came to a rapid *vivace* part, the other players could not keep up with him, and finally refused to take part in any more. The duets with M. Alard were therefore arranged, but it was a great relief to everyone when the engagement was at an end, as it was quite evident it had added nothing to the great artiste's reputation. Consequently, when the announcement was made that Paganini intended to give concerts himself, no one felt any anticipation of enjoyment from the first one and the result was a very small attendance. From the first moment, however, he held his audience spell-bound and what they lacked in numbers they made up for by their hearty appreciation of his wonderful playing. It was then seen where the mistake lay in the former concerts and his succeeding ones were given to crowded houses. A Scotch friend of mine who went to hear him left the hall before the concert was halfway through crying like a child; such was the power of this marvellous man over the emotions of his hearers.

This was the substance of my information from M. Alard, and it was some time afterwards M. Vuillaume told me he had once repaired Paganini's bow. Why he had not told me before was doubtless that he considered it too trivial a matter to mention, but I will tell the story as he told it to me. Paganini called one day and brought out from under his coat the bow which he invariably used and which was broken near the head. The break was kept together by a piece of string which he had no doubt put on himself. Now all sorts of stories were told, and possible and impossible rumours circulated about this most wonderful player and among the tales was one concerning this same bow. The reason of his being able to play staccato in such a marvellous way was declared to be because his bow was hollow and filled with a quantity of small leaden bullets, which ran up and down the bow when required to do so and stopped at once when not required.

Now although Vuillaume had heard and ridiculed this absurd story, he was none the less curious to inspect the bow for himself and determined not to miss the chance. Paganini merely asked him to repair it, but Vuillaume, pointing to the garniture or whipping, asked to be allowed to renew that. "Just as you please," was the answer. Encouraged by this, Vuillaume next pointed to the twine near the head and asked permission to renew that also. A silent nod of

acquiescence was given, and as the great man buttoned up his coat to go, Vuillaume picked up his knife and attacked the string at the head at once as it was here the bullets were said to be inserted. Paganini smiled grimly and said he had not believed Vuillaume to be such a fool as to believe the tales about his bow. When the wrapping was taken off there lay the magic wand in Vuillaume's hands. Only two rough ends of a broken stick, which had been held together by twine, no magic of any kind about it save that of the great player's fingers, which enabled him, with this broken bow, to hold audiences entranced, sometimes with celestial joy, and at others with strains of such heartrending sorrow, that many of his listeners had to leave the hall, quite unable to bear it.

Well, the bow was repaired and when the owner called for it, Vuillaume asked him to accept one of his own make, which he had indeed made specially for him ; remarking that it was always risky to use a broken bow as it was liable to give way again and that would be awkward, especially when playing in public.

" A thousand thanks, my dear Vuillaume," said Paganini, " but I have several fine bows which I never use and I might never use yours. Nevertheless, I will not disappoint you by refusing it and I will try and use it sometimes, although so far as my experience goes the difference in the merits of bows is infinitesimal, the only difference

lies with the player." This was indeed poor comfort to Vuillaume, who, while anxious to present the great violinist with a small token of his great admiration for him, had naturally hoped also to benefit a little by the advertisement it would be for himself. Paganini's lukewarm acceptance of the bow, and his accompanying remarks, of course, put an end to these hopes. This was really all the information regarding him that I could obtain from Vuillaume and I was the more disappointed because I had been told both by outsiders, and by Vuillaume himself, that he was more intimate with him than any other man in Paris.

No one seemed to know anything about his mode of living or how he spent his time while in Paris, and although, like Alard, many artistes called on him at his hotel, they seldom saw him even when he was in his rooms. This treatment naturally annoyed them and many ascribed his unsocial manners to jealousy of the great French violinists who were his contemporaries. This idea, however, was ridiculed both by Vuillaume and Alard as absurd. My next hope of gaining information lay in Sivori, the pupil of Paganini, and to him I turned my attention.

CHAPTER XI

PAGANINI'S PUPIL

In my conversations with Sivori I frequently referred to the lessons he had received from his great teacher, hoping to glean some information as to the personality of that remarkable man; but I always found Sivori very reticent on the subject. He admitted frankly that Paganini was probably the worst teacher of the violin who ever lived. He was very short and bitter in his remarks when his pupil shewed any deficiency in playing the studies he gave to him to practise. These studies generally consisted of Paganini's own compositions written hurriedly in a very cramped hand, as if he disliked having to write anything so simple, especially for his own pupil. His general mode of teaching was to walk up and down the room while Sivori was trying to play the last new exercise that had been given him, with a mocking smile on his face and uttering a depreciatory remark now and then. When his pupil had finished, he would come close up to him, still with the same mocking look on his face, and remain silent for a few moments looking

at him from head to foot (Sivori was of very small stature while Paganini was tall, fully six feet), and then ask if he thought he had played the study at all in the way he had been shewn. A trembling "No" was the poor little martyr's reply. "And wherefore no?" came the query. After a few minutes' silence the pupil would venture to say that he could not play it like his teacher because he had not the ability. Ability to play such a simple thing as that was not required; it was too ludicrous to say so. All that was wanted was steady work and application in place of laziness; he must put aside laziness or put aside the violin, whichever he preferred. However, he would try him once more, and seizing the violin like a lion seizing a sheep he would play the study again without even looking at the MS. sheet on the stand, moving about and playing it in a way that simply shot despair into his pupil's heart. Sivori could not help feeling a little amused also at the idea of Paganini expecting him or any one else to be able to play it in the way he did. One great lesson he carried away from his master though and that was not to neglect even for a day to practise scales.

I asked him if his master did this himself, and he told me he had never heard him nor had any one else as far as he knew. All he could tell regarding his great teacher's mastery of the instrument was, that it seemed to be born in

him and to grow and expand with his growth as a beautiful flower comes to crown a plant without any apparent effort on its part. Paganini had been sent to teachers when quite a child, but they had to give him up as he could play and understand music better than they. This was the gist of Sivori's information, by no means satisfactory in itself, and especially disappointing to me, as I was acquainted with him for many years and had plenty of opportunities to introduce the subject, not one of which I ever neglected. I sometimes thought that he kept the principal and most interesting details of his connection with Paganini to himself, in order that he might combine them with what he must have heard about him in his native town, and that he meant to give them to the world in his later years. But I finally abandoned that idea as in talking with friends who had known Sivori even longer than I had, I found that not one of them had ever been told as much as I had.

As I have already mentioned, Sivori practised scales daily and continued to do so until he became too old. For more than thirty years any visitor at the Hotel de Havane, Paris, could hear Sivori at his violin from 7 a.m. till 9 a.m. for although the hotel changed hands four times during that period, he never changed his residence. Latterly he reduced his scale practice to one hour and he always asserted that if any person with a love for music and a certain natural ability

would do in this respect as he did, they could learn to play the violin ; all the other essentials following as a matter of course. Sivori had several peculiarities in his manner of playing which were partly accountable to his very small hand. Owing to this he was forced to withdraw his thumb altogether from the neck of the violin when he went above the third position ; and as he had only his folded handkerchief placed on the collar of his buttoned coat, there was absolutely nothing, save the pressure of his chin, to hold the violin in position. The last time I met him I saw this illustrated in detail better than I had ever seen it before.

I called one day on MM. Gand and Bernardel, and found M. Gand trying the tone of a violin he had just finished mounting. He had had great difficulty with it and had mounted and remounted it several times before he got it to his mind, but at last it was right and he was, he assured me, thankful to get it finished. He handed it to me asking what I thought of it. I saw that it was a Bergonzi, but that it had suffered a good deal in its table from cracks, and also that a little new varnish had been added here and there. The mounting surprised me greatly, as the strings were close to the finger board with a very low bridge and the hand or neck was of a peculiar shape. It struck me at once that it was mounted like Sivori's violin but as he never bought a fiddle, I thought that

possibly this fiddle had been bought by one of his pupils who wished his instrument similarly mounted to his master's.

I asked M. Gand if this was the case and he replied I was not far wrong, but that Sivori himself had bought the violin cheap and wished it mounted like his Vuillaume. This, after two attempts M. Gand failed to accomplish and he refused to try again unless the Vuillaume was left with him as a guide.

Very much against his will Sivori consented to this, and the Vuillaume lay in its case beside M. Gand at that moment. M. Gand lifted it out and drew the bow across the strings, remarking as he did so, that there was no comparison between them, the Bergonzi was by far the best. He asked me to go to the far end of the room and play first one and then the other without telling him which I played. This was an altogether needless precaution, as the two tones proclaimed what they were as clearly as if they had spoken. A more wretched tone than the Vuillaume I never heard, and M. Gand, no mean judge and authority on tone, quite agreed with me. The Bergonzi, despite the curtailing of its merits in mounting, was far superior in our hands, both in quality and quantity.

While we were still in the midst of our discussion regarding them, who should step in but the owner of the two violins—Sivori, who after the usual salutations, at once launched forth

like a torpedo on the subject of his violin mountings. M. Gand handed him the Bergonzi. He inspected it minutely, placed his handkerchief on his coat and proceeded to play up and down every string with the most perfect tonation, his thumb always leaving the hand of the violin after the third position on all the strings with no perceptible difficulty. When he had finished and laid it down M. Gand, delighted to hear what a beautiful tone it had when played by such an artiste could not refrain from remarking: "You hear now what I have always told you, that for quality and generally for quantity, the Italian instruments are far superior to all others." "I don't know that," Sivori replied, "we will see immediately." And see or rather hear we did, to our utter amazement. He took up his Vuillaume and tuned it by merely plunking the strings with his fingers, and that so quickly, that we had no idea he was tuning it but expected to see him use the bow in the usual way. The handkerchief was laid on his collar as usual, and he began at once to run up and down each string with an agility of fingers which produced an astonishing beauty of tone. As he finished he remarked that he could play the Vuillaume with much greater ease than the Bergonzi, no doubt because he was accustomed to the larger size of the Vuillaume. To us who were listening, however, the absence of ease in playing the Bergonzi was not in the least perceptible but we

were bound to admit that the result of this comparison was entirely in favour of the Vuillaume, which, in his hands, outshone its rival on all points.

I will here describe this Vuillaume fiddle of Sivori's which was, of course, the Paganini copy. Much has been said and written about this violin, in many cases by people not sufficiently conversant with the details of instruments to give a correct description of it, so that the following will, I think, be of interest. This violin was made of wood which had been carefully chosen for its beauty, and also with regard to the quality of the tone. There is little doubt that the wood had been prepared by dry heat, which gave it a soft and matured tone with a tendency, in the hands of an ordinary player, to become muted, if played on continuously for a long time. It was well covered with a thin brown varnish, over a yellow coating in the wood, to give it the appearance of an old instrument. The edges outside the purfling were narrower than a Joseph's, and were made quite flat, whereas in the Josephs they are raised a little. The method of purfling at the corners, was simply such as any good workman would make who had never seen a Joseph, and the tone was, in my opinion, poor in comparison with many of his other copies. Fortunate it was indeed for its maker's reputation that it fell into the hands of no ordinary player, but into those of an artist like Sivori who could

bring out whatever tone he wished from it. It was by no means a copy as I have before said of Paganini's Guarnerius, which was in all points the crowning glory of Joseph; indeed I never saw a Joseph to compare with Paganini's though I have, of course, seen many whose owners held a different opinion. When I first saw this Vuillaume of Sivori's, which was five-and-twenty years after it was made, it had all the appearance of an old violin carelessly kept. It had, during that time, been regularly played on by its owner, and its table was covered with layers of dust and resin. When I next saw it, which was on the occasion I referred to at M. Gand's, I did not recognise it at first as Sivori's, so entirely changed was its appearance.

I got the reason of this from M. Sivori. It seemed that while playing in Hungary a short time before, he had been interviewed at a town there, by a violin maker and repairer who was very anxious to see his celebrated violin.

M. Sivori shewed it to him and, after admiring it, he pointed out that all these years' accumulation of dust and resin were bound to affect the tone as well as spoil the appearance of the violin. This fact had been frequently brought before Sivori and he thought he would just have the table cleaned and be done with it. The maker, therefore, was allowed to take it away with him on the strict understanding that only the dust and resin were to be removed and the

Vuillaume varnish underneath was to be left intact. Some time after the man had departed with the fiddle, it suddenly struck Sivori that he had made a mistake, perhaps a great one, in allowing him to take it away without knowing a little more about him. He had not even understood the name the man gave nor his address; all he knew was that he was a maker and repairer of violins. It was far on in the evening before he thought of all this and too late to hope to find him that night, and Sivori spent a sleepless night, a prey to great misgivings on the subject of his beloved violin.

At a very early hour next morning, he rose and went downstairs only to find that no one else was up and he had once more to wait as patiently as he could for some of the hotel staff to make their appearance. When the servants did appear, he appealed to them for the name and address of the maker but none of them could enlighten him on the subject. At last one of the waiters who had travelled a bit, had a bright idea. They could apply at the Post Office he said and Sivori enlisting his aid, they went off together to the Post Office where they got a list of the violin makers in the town. Armed with this, they started on a round of visits until they came to the man they sought. He also was up early and diligently at work on the fiddle, all too diligently, alas, for he had not only cleaned off the dust and the resin from the table but the

original varnish as well, and the wood was left as white as it was before a blush of colour was put on it. The maker was highly delighted with what he had done and assured Sivori that he had only to revarnish the table and the fiddle was complete, but Sivori was so much upset that he could not get his fiddle away quickly enough. He feared that the maker might proceed to restore the rest of it in the same way.

The fiddle was not revarnished and thus I saw it at Messrs. Gand and Bernardel's. I suppose it remained in that state until the death of its owner, which was in 1894. Sivori objected to the restoring of the varnish even by competent men, not so much on account of its changing the appearance of the fiddle, as the risk of changing its tone which a new coat of varnish would inevitably do. What had been done would no doubt detract from its value when sold, although as Sivori's violin made by Vuillaume, the best living maker of the nineteenth century, it would still bring a high price.

Paganini's violin, which now lies in the Council Hall in Genoa, to which town it was bequeathed by its owner, along with a bow, I will next describe as far as I can. It is a grand Joseph Guarnerius of the best period 1743 and is, as I have already said, one of the grandest its maker ever produced. It seems to be in perfect condition, shewing neither crack nor flaw although report has it that it had a fall once from a *dili-*

gence in France. It will interest those who have not seen it to learn that it seems to be in its mountings and other details just as it was when Paganini used it. The bridge is low and the hand is almost straight from the body to the head, with little back set, which prevented the use of a higher bridge. The upper line of the bridge on it is very narrow and straight, with small droopings at each side. Both the straightness and narrowness of this top line combined to bring the strings closer together and would, therefore, greatly facilitate the playing of the chords to which the great player was much given, and by means of which he produced some of his finest effects. This close grouping of strings both on bridge and fingerboard would entirely prevent its use by players in these days.

A story goes that on the occasion of a great violinist's visit to Genoa the guardians of the city profit by it to get up charity or other concerts and announce that the distinguished artiste will favour them by playing on Paganini's violin, lent specially for the occasion. Now I could not see that this was possible as the state of its mountings would be against it and further, owing to the breaking of the first and fourth strings, the bridge was awry, and was only kept on by the other two unbroken ones. Knowing that Sivori often played at these concerts, being a native of the town, and often passing the vacations there, I

determined to ask him the truth of this story, and if the artiste really got the loan of the violin. He replied frankly "Yes" and "No." The violin was on these occasions duly brought to the violinist and delivered to him with its bow in the case, in the presence of two or more councillors on the day of the concert. The artiste took it out of the case to verify it, and locked it up again and it was entrusted entirely to his care, no attendant being left to guard it.

Sivori, before leaving his house for the concert would re-open the case and substitute his own Vuillaume for the Guarnerius, which he carefully locked away in another case. He took both cases with him to the artiste's room, and when his call came an attendant carried up the Paganini case and placed it on a small table ; Sivori opened the case, took out the violin (his own of course) and played his solos amid wild applause. There was very little risk of this stratagem being discovered as even if an inquisitive stranger did get into the retiring room, the case containing the Guarnerius was carefully locked and they would have discovered nothing. Occasionally anxious enquirers came to the room after the solo was over, asking to see the violin, but he had always managed to dispose of them. This he said was what he did and I expect the explanation would be much the same from all the soloists. It is certainly the only feasible one, as one thing is quite certain, and that is that the

violin could never be played on as it is. The bow is a poor-looking one, to all appearance of Italian manufacture, just such a one as the broken one referred to previously might have been. This one shews no signs of having been broken but it is possible that the whipping which could not be dispensed with when the bow was in use, may have been taken off and the pieces glued together. It is impossible to tell this though from the outside of the case.

This was the last time I met Sivori. The wonderful beauty of his tone, the great facility with which he played the most difficult passages of music, despite the smallness of his hand, and his modesty and pleasant manner to all, will not soon be forgotten.

CHAPTER XII

THE PRINCE AND THE MARQUIS

It was in Brussels that I saw for the first time the celebrated Maggini violin which the Prince de Caraman Chimay, had bought from his teacher, Professor De Bériot. This great artiste and composer was at one time chief of the Violin School in the Brussels Conservatoire, and trained many famous violinists. The price which the Prince paid for his violin was high—£600—and it was the general belief that it was only because the buyer was a Prince and patron of the Professor's, that such a large sum was obtained for it. More especially was ground given for this belief by the fact that no other violin by this maker ever came near realizing such a price. Yet I thought when I saw it, and still think, that the price was not high for such a fiddle ; it was, in my opinion, quite worth that and more.

The true history of the purchase of this violin was told me by the Marquis Doria, rue des Ternes, Paris (the same street in which Vuillaume latterly lived) one day when we were breakfasting

together. The Prince afterwards confirmed the story.

It seemed that the Prince and the Marquis Doria were in their youthful days pupils of De Bériot at the same time. The Prince was much the better pupil, being more industrious than the Marquis, but he was unfortunately troubled with a nervous twitch in his right arm which could not be cured, and this caused him great annoyance in his bowing.

One of De Bériot's conditions to his pupils was that their violins must be supplied through him, and, as he had a great predilection for Maggini violins, the Prince and the Marquis were fitted out with one each, of the small type. De Bériot himself preferred the large model, owing to the greater amount of tone it had ; he liked a Strad. or Joseph better than the small type for playing on, and he sold the small ones to his pupils. Had it not been for this enforced purchase of a violin from his teacher, the Marquis would have been the possessor of the fine Stradivarius violin which Sarasate now plays. This violin lay in Vuillaume's for sale, and many a longing look did the Marquis give it. He knew, however, that in buying it he would practically only be locking up money in a case, as it would be quite impossible to play two violins with such widely different tones.

Not long after the two pupils purchased the small Magginis, De Bériot had decided to sell

his own grand one. His reason for this decision was his failing health and the fact that his eyesight was gradually giving way. He was at this time obliged greatly to curtail his public engagements and it was a good thing for him that he had made money by other things than public playing and teaching. From his musical compositions alone he derived a good sum, as they were much sought after; they were charming and suitable for either chamber concerts or public playing. As both Prince and Marquis greatly admired this violin of their Master's, naturally each was anxious to have it and began at once to try and raise the sum necessary—£600. They found it no easy matter as they both indulged in other and even more expensive hobbies than buying fiddles; they therefore decided to economise and see who first could raise the sum required; he was to be the buyer of the fiddle.

The Marquis got together 12,000 francs in cash, and he thought that this with the return of the small Maggini, for which he had recently given 3,000 francs, would secure him the violin. But he reckoned without his host, as on his offering the cash and violin to his teacher he was told that though he, De Bériot, sold violins to his pupils, he never bought one from them. The Marquis told me this annoyed him so much that he could not sleep for some nights afterwards, but it also most effectually cooled his ardour and he made no further endeavour to obtain the

fiddle. The field was thus left clear for the Prince who eventually managed to raise the sum required and bought the instrument.

This violin was, and still is, unique. It is well covered with the original brown varnish, not what we call a brilliant varnish but very beautiful and pleasing to the eye on account of its soft and "murly" appearance. It is quite untouched by any clear modern varnish. There are two places where the varnish has been almost totally worn off; one is on the front right hand side of the table, where the hand rests when playing the shift, the other is where the chin rests on both sides of the tail piece. Few players nowadays use the right side of the tail piece when playing but at one time players used it constantly as a rest for the chin, believing that they thereby gave a longer stretch to the bow. Thus most of the old instruments shew this mark. The greatest living artiste of the present day, Dr. Joachim, still keeps the position of the chin more to the right than any other artiste, although never entirely over the tail piece.

To return to De Bériot's Maggini: its arches are of medium height, and the back one is a little flatter than the table. As usual the rims are low, the result, of course, of its size. The back is in two pieces of finely chosen maple cut half slab, causing a rich effect in the wood; which in itself had a very pronounced or, as the French say, lively curl in it. The table, which is of very

fine pine, has moderate lines on the left side and broader ones on the right, running straight and clear from end to end. The head has the half turn extra that is seen in some of this maker's fiddles, and the tone is certainly as wonderful as the tones of the larger Magginis usually are. The third and fourth strings are quite alto, but the first and second are rich and full, and not alto in the least.

It is an undoubted fact that anyone accustomed to playing a large Maggini, cannot as a rule play any other maker's instruments with satisfaction and this to a certain extent is a drawback, as it has been proved again and again that the tone of a Maggini is not satisfactory in its carrying powers in a large crowded hall. The back strings —third and fourth—of these fiddles seem to get quite muffled and to disappear inside like those of a tenor, although, of course, not quite to the same extent ; while the tones of other instruments played in the same hall, although they might sound hard to the player's ears, yet carried well and clearly. In proof of this statement I may mention that players who used these large Magginis, were constantly experimenting with the bar post, and even with the inside linings, in order to try and remedy this defect of the two back strings. The only way for it to be done was to allow the repairer to put in the centre of the table a large doubling of wood, and the same on the back beneath the end of the sound post.

A larger bass bar and heavier linings had little or no effect and indeed, even with the doubling of both back and table, the result was not completely successful. Certainly the back strings were firmer and more outside than before, but what *they* gained in tone the two first lost, and while the strings were thus less unequal in quantity the tone was no longer a distinctive Maggini one, but something quite indefinable. The same peculiarity of the back strings is to be found in the smaller ones, although in a fainter degree. The reason for this peculiar tone was that both back and table were made of very thin wood, as indeed all the early Brescian violins were.

As the Prince de Caraman Chimay was taking the large one from his Master, I purchased the small one and got with it a certificate, stating that it had been played on by De Bériot. It was in splendid preservation and might be taken as a good example of Maggini's smaller sized violins.

The next Maggini violin I purchased had quite a history. It had been owned by no less a personage than King George the Fourth, who had taken a fancy to learn the violin. Finding that his progress was not very rapid, he gave it up as hopeless, and presented the violin to a gardener at Kew. It remained in this man's family for a long time, but was eventually sold to a dealer in Wardour Street, London. This dealer sold it, got it back in exchange, and sold it again, and it ran the "gamut" among most of the dealers

in that street, until it became common from its being so often in the market. I had sold a Stradivarius to one of these London dealers and he offered me this Maggini in part payment. He asked such a small price for it, and its appearance was so new, that I had doubts as to its authenticity and in order to allay my doubts he told me its history. He hoped, he said, that I would take it abroad, and sell it there as the dealers here were sick of it, which was his reason for asking such a low price. I could, if I liked, ask any of the dealers about it and they would, he knew, confirm his statement. Knowing I could rely on his word, I closed with his offer and took the fiddle. It was, as I have already said, perfectly new, except the hand, which had been inserted between the head and body to lengthen the stop—as is usual in nearly all old violins except those in which the original hand or neck is thick enough for use ; or those which have been fortunate enough to fall into the hands of intelligent repairers. In the latter case the original hand is preserved and lengthened by a wedge let in between the upper inside block and the heel of the old hand.

To return to the fiddle ; it was covered with a beautiful yellow varnish of great brilliancy and depth, was double purfled with ebony inlay in the centre of the back and was ornamented with clover leaves at the upper and lower ends, running into the body from the inside line of

purfling. The wood of the back and rims—the latter low—were slab cut of a very rich quality and shewed up through the transparent varnish like the details of a fine picture. The table was of red pine of very close grain, which gave it a hard appearance and the head was of the same form and size as De Bériot's but without the extra half turn. The marks of the gouge or other tool used in the making, could be seen on both these fiddle heads. The *ff*'s were very characteristic indeed, being long and not very cleanly cut although they were well placed on the table. The arches were flatter even than those of De Bériot, they came straight from the edges to the centre, with very slight hollows and the back was slightly flatter than the table. The tone was of the true Maggini kind already described.

I had this violin on hand a considerable time before selling it, and therefore had the opportunity of shewing it to various dealers and judges and its history was confirmed by several of the dealers. Among others I shewed it to J. B. Vuillaume, and although at the first he shook his head gravely, he still continued to examine it and finally sat down and went over it thoroughly. There was no doubt of the fact that the work in all its details was Maggini's and the varnish too, the *ff*'s being so wide and long that the pieces of the inside linings could be seen through them, also part of the corner blocks and as these were beyond dispute primitive and old, they also

attested its genuineness. But the new appearance of the whole staggered Vuillaume as it had me. After a time he rose and said, "Yes, it is certainly genuine, but its condition is upsetting. Do you wish to sell it?" "Certainly," said I. "What price?" I named a price. "That's too little and is considerably below its value," said Vuillaume. I told him its history, and the reason why I was anxious not to carry it back to London with me. He insisted that its history enhanced its value as an instrument on which a King had learnt to play did not turn up every day. Besides, he said, to put a low price on it, would only raise doubts as it would never do to recount all its history to every possible buyer. I must add at least £40 to my price, and if I would do that, he would give me a line to M. Leonard, the famous Belgian violinist. This gentleman had settled in Paris in order to teach and he played a Maggini; he had written a short time before to Vuillaume, asking if he would kindly inform him when he had a Maggini for sale, as he had a pupil who was most anxious to have one. Needless to say, I was in no way averse from getting a higher price for my instrument, and therefore agreed to Vuillaume's arrangement.

On the following day I went to call on M. Leonard, armed with my letter of introduction and took the fiddle with me. I duly handed him both letter and fiddle. At sight of the latter

he was as much upset as Vuillaume had been, indeed had it not been for the assurance which the letter gave, that the great connoisseur himself was satisfied of its authenticity, I am inclined to think M. Leonard would have had nothing more to say to it. The most convincing proof to him would, of course, be the tone, and that, he could, and did, speedily test for himself. After trying mine he took up his own (which was of the large size but had evidently seen some rough usage) and played it. The difference in the tone was great, his being firm and more outside on the back strings, while the two first were good and even brilliant ; but they lacked the fullness and richness of mine. He tried mine again but the difference especially in the back strings, was so great that he soon laid it down remarking at the same time, " It is impossible to play either instrument after the other, and as my pupil wishes one as nearly similar in tone to mine as possible, it would be useless to shew him yours. But should you come across a Maggini with a tone similar to mine, would you be good enough to let me know ? " I said certainly I would, and we parted. I was aware I had very little chance of coming across one similar to his, because I knew when I heard it, that it had been doubled inside in the manner already explained to throw out the tone, whilst mine was just as it had left its maker's hands. As I was not there to give my opinion on his fiddle, I, of course, said nothing

about this to him, and I never managed to get one to suit him.

I sold the George IV as it came to be called, shortly afterwards for a fair price to an amateur from Edinburgh, whom I met in Lille. He came to my hotel to see what I had in the fiddle line, and bought it. Not long afterwards I got it back again, and re-sold it at a better price to a great artiste in Germany, who was not playing in public. On account of the exceedingly new appearance of this instrument the ordinary expert seeing it after De Bériot's splendid specimen would be inclined to say: " What a splendid copy ", but it is a genuine Maggini with the true tone of the large ones which have not been doubled inside.

CHAPTER XIII

A PURCHASE IN ST. PETERSBURG

Many who, like myself, are old enough to remember the Crimean War, and the keen interest taken not only in it but in Russia generally, will understand the satisfaction and pleasure which I felt when, quite unexpectedly, I got a chance to visit that country.

In the Spring of '76 I received a letter from a lady in St. Petersburg, saying that her late husband had left a collection of high priced stringed instruments, and that several of her friends had advised her to write to me and see if I would buy them. In order that there should be no misunderstanding as to price, she enclosed all the receipts shewing what had been paid for them; she was evidently a first-rate business woman and very straightforward in her dealings. On looking over the receipts I found that nearly all the instruments had been purchased either through J. B. Vuillaume or Gand *Frères*, Paris, and as they were duly guaranteed by these firms, there could be little doubt of their authenticity. The next consideration was the price to be paid.

They had, with a few exceptions, been bought many years before, and their value had greatly increased. It would pay me, therefore, to buy them at cost price, if—but that *if* meant a lot —they had been well cared for and were good specimens of the makers. This it was impossible to decide without seeing the instruments, and here was the difficulty. It was, of course, useless to ask the lady to send them to me to examine, as, from the tone of her letter, it was quite evident it was not necessity which made her desire to sell them, but simply that as there was no one who took any interest in them, they were only in the way and might as well be sold as not. It was plain the sacrifice, both of time and money, must be on my side.

My arrangements were quickly made and I started; I broke the journey at Berlin for a night and day, in order to call on the dealers there. As usual they all received me very kindly, and I saw some fine instruments, two in particular, which I tried hard to get. One was a splendid 'cello by Montaignaux in an almost perfect state of preservation; indeed I never saw another of that maker's that came within a hundred miles of it. The other was a princely Petrus Guarnerius. The price asked for both 'cello and violin was, however, quite impossible and could not indeed be got by me even now, twenty years later, for either of them. I was therefore forced to give up all thought of buying them, though I did it

with a heavy heart; my only consolation lay in the hope of finding a gem in the collection I was going to see.

I travelled from Berlin, in a first class and Pullman. It was my first experience of the latter and will in all probability be my last although it is to be hoped that everyone is not so unfortunate in their experience as I was. My berth was one of four, and when I turned in at midnight, there was no other occupant in the compartment, and I concluded I would have a quiet sojourn and sleep well. Alas, for my hopes. About one a.m. I was awakened by loud laughing and talking and looking out, discovered a group of men dressed in most elaborate sleeping suits. What these were for I failed to see, as sleep was apparently the last idea in their heads, either for themselves or anyone else. They certainly shewed off the suits though, as they sallied in and out of the Pullman every few minutes, without any sign of going to bed. My sleep over and I certainly could have got as much in an ordinary carriage. Later on we had to change into the Russian carriages, as the gauge of the Russian line is wider than that of the German. Next we had to turn out for examination of passports and luggage, a most tedious business, as all the passports are kept, and the traveller is given a green one instead, to be used while travelling in Russia. When leaving the country your own is returned to you.

A Purchase in St. Petersburg

Another tiresome journey and then we arrived at St. Petersburg on a beautiful Sunday evening in June. After a narrow escape of being bodily torn to pieces by porters and conductors of vehicles of all sorts, I managed to reach the Hotel d'Angleterre. A gentleman recommended me to go there on account of my inability to speak the language. In many of the smaller hotels no language but Russian is spoken, but in this one French was also spoken. The day after my arrival I sent a note to the lady telling her of my arrival and asking if it would be convenient for her to receive me. The reply being favourable, I went into the hall to consult the porter as to the best means of reaching my destination. This man, who was of splendid physique, magnificently dressed, and much decorated, spoke many languages and mistaking me for a Frenchman spoke first in that language, but he also spoke perfectly in English. I explained where I wanted to go and he recommended me to have a guide; he knew the very person to suit me, a M. Pilly, born in St. Petersburg, but of English parents. The charge for this gentleman's services was £1 a day, but he assured me I could not get a better guide. So M. Pilly was sent for and came promptly. As he seemed a smart young fellow and I was anxious to see as much of the place as possible during my stay, I engaged him.

This matter arranged, I supposed we should

now set off but it seemed there were still further ceremonies to go through. We must have a drosky and the porter went to the door and blew a whistle. Immediately the drosky came round the corner and pulled up before the porter. A long discussion about the fare followed but evidently they could not come to terms as the driver was finally waved away. Several others followed with the same result, and at last I asked Pilly why the porter spent so much time arguing over a few kopecks, and if the drivers had not a table of fares? He told me that such a thing did not exist, as the drivers could neither read nor understand it, and their charge was whatever they could get. If the porter gave in to them once, all his ability to fix fares would be gone. At last, however, the porter did manage to fix not one but two, as each vehicle holds only one person, and I got into one while Pilly followed in the other. Fortunately the journey was short—indeed we could have walked to the house in the time spent arguing about the fares—as rattling over such badly paved streets on a hard seat is no joke. I told Pilly it was ridiculous to drive such a short distance; but he was imbued with all the Russian prejudices, and said that any visitor leaving such an hotel on foot would lower not only his own dignity but also the prestige of the hotel. After that, of course, I could say nothing.

I was most politely received by the lady's major-domo, who, after apologizing for her

inability to receive me at such an early hour, offered to give me all the information in his power regarding the instruments. In fact, he said, he could tell me more about them than the lady could, and we adjourned to the music room, where the collection was. This I found to consist of three Strad. 'cellos, several violins, and a tenor. The king of the collection was one of the 'cellos, which was of Strad.'s best period 1712, the other two being of the early period. None of them could be called first-class in point of preservation, and owing to their mountings not being in order it was impossible to judge their tone, but they would all, I thought, prove saleable when put in proper order. We speedily came to an agreement, which does not take long when both buyer and seller are actuated by motives of fair dealing, and the major-domo came with me to the bank where his mistress kept her account, in order to have my English drafts cashed and get the matter settled.

I may here mention with pleasure, the courtesy and kindness of bankers abroad to me, even when my business with them was of the most trifling description. We were shewn into the bank parlour until the exchange of money was settled and as soon as this was done the purchase was concluded. Before leaving me the major-domo asked if I wished to see the sights of the city. If so, his mistress would send a friend of hers on the following day to take me round. I thanked

him but said I had already engaged a guide. He begged me to allow the lady's friend to come as she would, he knew, be most disappointed if I refused. So I consented.

The next part of the programme was to see about packing cases for the instruments. I held a council with Pilly on the matter. According to him it would be no easy matter as he was quite sure Russian artisans would never be able to understand, much less make, the sort of thing I wanted. In any case I would not get them made in less than a fortnight. However, boxes I had to get made somehow, and I told him to take me to a large shop where we would see a capable master or foreman. The inevitable droskies were whistled for and we got in without discussing the fares, although personally I would have preferred to walk; but we were bound to keep up our dignity, and duly impress the joiners, master and men, regardless of the expense.

After another short rattle along the streets, we arrived at the shop and passed through into a large court where the men were working. Most of them were hewing various sizes of wood with short-handled axes, and to me it was surprising how smooth a surface they obtained with such an implement. We were taken into the manager's room and Pilly started to describe what I wanted. Although I could not understand the conversation, I could see that Pilly evidently didn't know himself very clearly what

was wanted, as the manager seemed to get more and more bewildered as he went on. I therefore tried to explain by sketching first the shape of the 'cello case and then the outline of a larger one, square at both ends. No use, he could not understand it at all, and leaving Pilly with him I went back to the lady's house and got an empty 'cello case with which I returned to the shop. This I laid on the ground and drawing a line round it with the point of my stick shewed him the height I wanted. At last he grasped the idea and undertook to have them ready for me in a fortnight's time. This would not suit me at all, and Pilly and he discussed the matter for an hour, at the end of which the manager promised that the cases should be ready in four days.

There was nothing further to be done now but wait until they were ready, and we returned to the hotel. There I told Pilly that I should not require him for the next three days, but on the fourth he could come. The following day at ten o'clock the waiter ushered into my room a naval officer, who, after gravely disposing of his overcoat, handed me two cards, one from the lady and one of his own. I was rather taken aback and thought there must surely be some mistake as it was quite apparent from his uniform that he was an officer. I asked him first in English (which he did not understand) and then in French if there had not been a mistake as I

did not suppose for a moment he would spend his time conducting me over the city. "No," he replied. "There is no mistake. I have come for that purpose at the request of my honoured relative; as I can procure entrance to many places, which are not always open to sightseers, she thought my escort would be more enjoyable for you than that of an ordinary guide." I could only thank him both for the lady's kindness and his own and we set off together.

As St. Petersburg has been described by more able pens than mine I will not enter into details regarding the various places we visited but we spent a most enjoyable day, and about five o'clock, returned homewards. I invited my guide to dine with me but he could not, as his dinner would be served on board his yacht—a paddle steamer of the Czar's, lying in the Neva—and I had to resign my hospitable intentions. He conducted me to my hotel and, after making arrangements for the next day, he left me. On the two following days he returned and guided me faithfully to every sight worthy of the name. That it must have been a bore to him I am quite sure, but he never shewed any sign of weariness and was a most delightful companion.

At the end of the third day he invited me to dine with him on board his yacht, an invitation which I accepted with great pleasure and we spent a delightful evening together. Of the many sights I saw the two which impressed me

most were the skeleton of a mammoth of the antediluvian period and the island of SS. Peter and Paul situate in the Neva, though indeed I enjoyed them all thoroughly.

I also looked up an old friend, whose acquaintance I had made some years previously in Cologne. He was a descendant of Otto whose name is always respected and attractive to fiddlers and whose book on fiddles was the only one of its kind for many a day. It latterly became so rare that only wealthy amateurs had copies of it; his descriptions of Italian instruments were very good though they didn't go far enough but doubtless this was owing to the fact that his experience in these instruments was limited. It could not well be otherwise as in his days the only available means of travel were the mail coaches and although they went to all places of importance in the country there were few of them and to travel by them was very expensive. The list of German instruments and their makers in Otto's book is copious and includes his own productions, of which, naturally, he had a good conceit, and which he thought would in time quite outrival those of the Italian makers. He mentions in his book a very original idea of one maker. This was to drive a wheel by water power, which would in turn work a bow across the strings of a fiddle day and night, the object being to grind the roughness of tone in new fiddles into

the smoothness of the old. I never heard though how this plan worked out.

Well, to return to my friend, I found him installed in a fine shop well stocked with instruments, principally German, but he shewed me a remarkably fine specimen of a J. B. Guadagnini of Plaisance. It was not for sale or I should have endeavoured to buy it. We spent a very pleasant hour or two together chatting over old days in Cologne, and he was quite delighted with my visit. I also called on the other German dealers who, although they did not know me personally, recognised my name when I handed them my card. They had nothing of much importance to shew me and they told me they could only sell cheap instruments in that town, for when a wealthy customer wanted a high priced one, he got it from Paris.

On the fourth day Pilly reported himself as arranged and we set off to get the cases. Instead of these being ready for me they were not even begun and Pilly's joy was great that I had proved the truth of his prophecy. I was very much annoyed, however, and told him so and leaving strict orders that they were to be ready by the following day we proceeded to the offices of the steamship companies to enquire about the arrival and departure of the steamers. First we went to Hull and Goole's where we were informed that they expected a steamer shortly but could not say exactly when, as it was not yet announced ;

possibly it would be in a fortnight, perhaps longer, certainly not any sooner. That was no use, and we next went to the Edinbro' and Leith Shipping Co. They were more sanguine and felt quite sure their boat would be the first to arrive and depart. This was more promising, and I told them I had four cases large but very light containing valuable instruments which I wished to send by their steamer if I could get them safely stored until the steamer arrived. "Oh, yes, certainly I could," they said, "just put them on the quay beside the steamer's berth; they will be quite safe there, no one will meddle with them. All the other shippers left their goods there," they said, "when the steamer was not in port." "What sort of goods were they?" I asked. "They were various, but principally hides, flax, and tallow." "And was that really the only place in which I could store my cases," I enquired. "Yes," they said, "it was." I need hardly say I did not accept their offer.

We next tried the railway goods station where I offered to pay for a whole van to convey them to the German frontier. No they never did such a thing was the answer I got, they required all the vans for their regular traffic. Besides the contents of the cases would be as fragile as glass and further they were works of art according to my description and as such there would be a heavy duty to pay on them. I asked what the duty would amount to, and

after half an hour's poring over an immense book I was told that the duty would be 75%. This fairly took my breath away as I naturally concluded it would be quite impossible to get them out of the country without paying this tax. Certainly thought I, Russia is the place for Art treasures as whatever comes into the country does not leave it easily.

We beat a retreat, my men and I, and discussed the affair till midnight and here my guide's knowledge of Russian officials stood me in good stead. He, knowing the uncertainty of action of the Civil Section of the Government and the varied meanings that the details of their instructions might bear, proposed to put a bold face on the matter and this was his plan. I was to take the cases with me the following evening to the mail train which left at 10 p.m., as there were fewer passengers and less luggage by this train and I might, by paying extra, be able to take them with me. Pilly asked if I had still some English yellow boys in my purse, as if so he would take ten to use if necessary. I gave them to him and he went off.

At 9.30 p.m. the following evening we started for the station, the cases having been sent before us on a dray and there they were awaiting our arrival—the porters having been ordered not to take them off. As I had my return ticket I went to the luggage side and shewed it in order to get the cases booked and paid for, but was

met by a blank refusal. On this Pilly jumped over the counter and disappeared into the office but shortly after came out saying he must get hold of another man. Away he went and left me waiting.

The time passed rapidly and when the luggage place was cleared it wanted only five minutes to ten, then it was three minutes and I gave up all hope of starting that evening as I knew there would now be no time to weigh and book my precious cases. Just then in rushed Pilly and spoke to the clerk inside, who immediately shouted an order to the porters standing round. They at once unloaded the cases and took them straight to the van, Pilly telling them that I would pay the carriage at the frontier station, which was all the journey they were booked for.

I managed to get into a saloon carriage just as the train was in motion, thankful to have made a start on my return journey. I found I had got into a carriage which had been reserved by a gentleman for his wife, himself and servants and, consequently I would require to change at the first stopping place. I duly apologized for the mistake and, one remark leading to another, we were soon chatting pleasantly together and when the first stopping place was reached neither the lady nor her husband would hear of my changing to another carriage. The chief conductor who had seen me enter came to tell me I must

change, but on the gentleman assuring him that they wished me to stay, he desisted.

I found my companions extremely affable and kind. They were going to their country estate for the summer as they spent the winter in the capital. We chatted about many things, exchanging stories of people and places ; they were greatly interested in hearing about Scotch folks and customs, just as I was in hearing about the Russian folk. I took the opportunity to ask if it was really the case that a Russian gentleman would not walk if he could possibly drive ; the gentleman said that was the case at one time, but not now. The idea was mainly kept up by hotel porters and as the proprietors of the hotels thought it added distinction to their establishments to have the visitors driving to and from them they did not trouble to contradict the story. Like all other educated Russian people with whom I came in contact these people were most agreeable and were I think the kindest strangers I ever met on my travels. They were very anxious that I should come with them to their country house and spend a week or longer if I cared. I much regretted the impossibility, for with my luggage and the precious cases to look after I was afraid to venture. They kindly renewed their hospitable invitation when we arrived at the frontier station and hoped I might manage to come later on in the summer, or failing that, to pay them a visit at St. Petersburg.

We parted and I went to see what the German officials would do with my cases; it was here I had to change trains as the frontier was reached. Passports had to be exchanged and after I had seen to this I went over to the German train to find out if there were any chance of my luggage and cases being transferred from one train to the other. They were put out on the platform and left severely alone, and I had to see what I could do. I asked the clerk what the carriage was from St. Petersburg and was told the sum—very moderate indeed—which I paid. I next addressed myself to the station master and asked if he would allow them to go on with the train to Berlin. He said they could not go with the present train as they would require to pass the Custom officials' inspection, after which he would be able to decide whether they might be taken by the mail train, which left twelve hours later.

The cases were taken into the luggage room and all opened; as they were found to contain only what I had stated, it was one point in my favour shewing that I was an honest traveller. Curiously enough, I had to thank this enforced examination for giving me the solution of a problem connected with fiddles which had puzzled me greatly and also all the other fiddle folks to whom I had mentioned the matter.

I could not understand the round holes sometimes to be found in the rims of small violins, large altos and 'cellos, generally in the centre

bout of the instrument, as well as in the under ones. These holes are filled up with quite a different sort of wood from that of the instrument and it was evident they had been made after the fiddles had left the makers' hands. The holes are not to be found on all instruments, indeed one might handle a great many without seeing one so marked, but I was anxious to know the cause of this marking. Now came the explanation: after all the instruments had been taken out of their cases a man with an auger stepped forward and turning a 'cello on its side stood ready to bore a hole in the rim wherever the officer might indicate. It flashed on me at once what they were going to do and I quickly stepped forward, tilted the 'cello on its head and pulled out the pin which left the string holder. The officer who had been watching my proceedings asked what I was going to do, but when I told him he could now look inside without boring a hole he complied, remarking with a laugh that it was a lesson to him and a good one, which he would remember in future and save damaging the instruments. I have no doubt whatever that this practice of boring holes had been followed by the French Custom officials on instruments coming out of Italy.

It was a case of mutual enlightenment and the rest of the inspection was got over safely. Then came the repacking of the 'cellos, which took three hours to accomplish and I had still several

hours to wait for the next train, though whether I would get my cases on it or not I did not know. I found, on making enquiries, that if I could take them with me I might hire a special van, which would take them to Berlin after which I would have another change, and this I resolved to do. To pass the time I went to have a look at the country, but was glad to return to the station in a very short space of time. A more desolate and barren land than this frontier country between Germany and Russia it would be hard to find.

I went into the restaurant and ordered dinner and while I was waiting for it, several officials entered and went up to the *buvette* for a glass of wine. Among them were the station master and a friend of his ; I kept my eye on them and as they passed me on their way out, the station master saluted me *à la militaire*. I, thereupon, rose and asked if he and his companion would honour me by taking a glass of wine with me. They accepted, but after a few minutes, the friend apologizing for his haste, left to keep an appointment.

I asked the station master to give me the pleasure of his company at dinner, which he did and we enjoyed it together, finishing up with a bottle of Rhine wine and coffee and a *petit verre* afterwards. I studiously refrained from any allusion to my cases and we had a pleasant time conversing on various topics. After dinner he had, of course, to return to his duties, but in

less than an hour he came back and said an extra passenger carriage would be added to the mail train. My cases would be put into two of the compartments and I could occupy the third one next them. More than that, he gave me a letter to the station master of the other railway line in Berlin, to which I would require to change for Belgium. So my little bit of hospitality worked wonders in smoothing out the difficulties. He came to the carriage window to bid me adieu, adding that he would be pleased to see me back again and that if any difficulty should arise at Berlin I was to send him a telegram. I could see that he was a man of considerable ability and standing.

We arrived in due course at Berlin and I presented my letter to the station master of the other line. After reading it several times, to my great relief, he decided to allow the cases to accompany me by the mail train to the Belgian frontier; after which he said I would need to do the best I could for myself, as the officials in that small country were more strict than anywhere else. I felt, however, that once there I was within sight of home and thought that if the officials objected to my cases going by passenger train I could only submit and send them by goods train. This as it turned out I had to do, but I managed to get a special van and after seeing them safely put in I went to Brussels for a day to await their arrival at Ostend. I got

them there all right and decided to travel by the night boat as there would be less luggage going by it.

It had been blowing pretty hard all day and as night came on the wind increased. As it came near the hour for sailing some of the crew began to swing in the boats as a precaution for a rough passage, while others took off the hatches preparatory to stowing away the luggage. I could not see the captain and asked the mate if he would send two hands to help the two porters I had to bring the cases on board. He demurred slightly but finally ordered two men to go with me and my cases were got aboard and stowed away under hatches along with my luggage. The captain who had been ashore, came on board shortly after but had too much to occupy his attention to bother about luggage. By this time it was blowing a full gale from the south west, a most dangerous wind for that port as the entrance to it is full of shifting sand banks, which move with every gale, and particularly when the wind is in that direction. When the train arrived, word was sent up to the passengers that the boat would not sail that night but that an hour would be fixed next morning.

When next morning came, however, and the Dover steamer came in an hour late, her captain's report of the weather was so bad that our captain would not venture until the wind had moderated a little. It was, therefore, late in the evening

before we ventured out, when the wind had gone down a bit. But if the wind had gone down the sea had not abated its fury one jot, in fact, it seemed to get wilder and as soon as we were properly out of the shelter of the port our heads were where our feet should have been and we were being pitched backwards and forwards like balls. The boat rose well to the waves, but was perpendicular most of the time. It was a record passage.

The luggage below had fetched away in a very short time and the hatches had to be opened to allow men to go down and stow it better. In my anxiety about my precious cases, I scrambled along after them and peering down into the hold was nearly pitched in head first. The mate, who pulled me back, gave me a few words for attempting to go there at all. I staggered back to the cabin door—to go inside was impossible, the atmosphere was so close and stuffy—and I tried to console myself with the memory of the stout packing cases I had had made. I was wet through and shivering with cold, as being the month of July such a finish up to my journey had not occurred to me and I had stupidly packed my overcoat in my trunk down in the hold.

Some of us managed by this time to get into a small deck cabin and from the door of this I looked out now and again to see how we were getting on and if there were any other vessel in sight. But there was nothing to be seen and

the effect of the stormy sea and the fast gathering night was inexpressibly dreary. To my great astonishment I heard two pings on the engineer's bell and immediately the speed was reduced, the result of which was that the little craft floated over the seas much more easily and without shipping any water. Some of the passengers thought we must be in Dover, while others surmised that the engineers wanted a rest. The relief from being drenched was being enjoyed by all, when suddenly over went the boat on her side and a volume of water came on board that swept everything movable before it. I only managed to save myself and some companions by getting inside the cabin and locking and bolting the door although to accomplish it we had to go on our knees. It was well for us that we effected this in time as when the boat righted herself a quantity of the water came rushing back which would have completely filled the little cabin. Furious rolling continued for some time and I began to understand the reason : it was mainly because her head had been altered some points and we were facing England. Now came the worst time of all, terribly trying to everyone ; we were so close to the Goodwins that neither light nor ship was visible between us and them and we were all devoutly thankful when we were safely past them.

We got into Dover only by passing the pier and then turning back and coming in at the

east side of it. We disembarked with considerable difficulty as great seas were pouring over the whole length of the pier and we were a sorry crowd. Wet and miserable I only waited to ascertain that the luggage would be taken to the Custom house and examined next morning. I went to the King's Head hotel and was not long in getting into bed. I rose about twelve again and after having breakfast I went down to the Custom house. And there I saw a sight —my poor cases broken and split in all directions, only a small piece of each still holding on to the inside ones. The debris had been mixed up with a host of things I had never seen before. All articles liable for duty had been placed on one side and a motley collection they made, boxes of cigars, the remnants of six large cut glass bottles which had been filled with eau-de-Cologne, not a whole one among them, and only some dregs of the scent, a parrot cage with no parrot, slippers, etc., etc.

" Come away, sir, " said the officer to me, " we must have all these cases opened." I assured him he was not more anxious on that point than I was and he ordered one of the men to open them. But first he insisted that all this collection of broken bottles, etc., was mine too, and that I must pay duty on them. I declined to have anything to do with them and this I saw made a bad impression on him. Merely remarking that the dodge was an old one and too trans-

parent to work, he turned his attention to the cases. To my intense relief the contents of all the cases were quite sound. The officer had each taken out and thoroughly examined to find out no doubt whether I had any more scent or cigars packed away in them. Of course, he found none and his own common sense might have told him that no one would risk damaging a 'cello to save the duty on a few cigars.

"Well," said he at last, "you refuse to pay duty on these cigars, etc." "Certainly I do," I said. "They will be confiscated and you will lose them," was his next remark. "As I never owned them I can't lose them," said I, "and I decline to take them or pay the duty either." So these were laid aside. "Now these instruments. Are they yours?" "Yes," I said. "And do you intend to sell them?" "Yes." You do not intend using them all yourself." "Not quite." "Then we must fine you for bringing them here on a ship carrying mails." "Indeed and why?" I asked. "Because no merchandise is allowed to be carried on a mail steamer." "Then why were they not refused at Ostend?" "That does not concern us. You must pay the fine." "How much will that be?" "I will tell you shortly." "I hope you will take into consideration the fact that it was done in ignorance and make it as low as you can." To this I got no answer and after waiting ten minutes he came back and said, "The lowest I can charge

you is five pounds." This was cheering. I knew that if I paid this amount I would not have sufficient cash in hand for the carriage of the cases up to London. I told him so and he said I could remit the fine from London and he would retain the cases till it came. But I was determined I would do no such thing, the cases should go along with me to London as they had come with me all the way, and I hunted up the station master and laid the matter before him. He gave me permission to take them with me by a slow passenger train on condition that they were not removed from the London station until the fine was paid.

On my arrival in London, after paying carriage on the boxes, I found I had exactly one shilling and sixpence left—cabby's fare to the bank—out of a hundred pounds I had taken with me for travelling expenses. I was not sorry to be back in London again, pleasant though my visit to St. Petersburg had been. The return journey had been so full of worry and anxiety that I was glad to get it over, and after escaping the taxes in other countries to have been fined in my own was to me "the unkindest cut of all." My collection was soon put in order and ready for sale; one of the Strad. 'cellos 1708, being bought by the late Mr. Carrodus.

CHAPTER XIV

VIEUXTEMPS—THE CELEBRATED VIRTUOSO

I have in a previous chapter referred to N. F. Vuillaume's *locataire* M. Jansen and his pleasant musical afternoons, at which I heard many great artistes play. It was at one of these private concerts that I had the pleasure of meeting M. Vieuxtemps, the celebrated virtuoso, whose fame has spread to many lands. This gentleman, who was a native of Verviers, Belgium, stood head and shoulders in ability above all the other artistes even of the celebrated Belgian school. Though Belgium is such a small country this school has produced a large number of eminent musicians, many of them natives. At the time when I made M. Vieuxtemps' acquaintance he was the principal violin professor in the Brussels Conservatoire of Music. I heard him play many times in public and as will be remembered he was the first great artiste I heard in Glasgow; but having always seen him from a distance and in evening dress, I did not recognise him when he entered M. Jansen's room.

On the afternoon in question, the quartette was in full swing when a gentleman entered and

bowing to the company generally, took a chair beside me and sat down to listen to the music. He was directly opposite the first violin and I was quite annoyed to see him making signals to the player from time to time whenever he could catch his eye. This I thought the height of ill manners and felt much inclined to tell him to stop it had it not been for the fear that I might interrupt the harmony. The leader, who had been playing well up to this intrusion became very nervous and seemed greatly relieved when the quartette came to an end. He rose and came over to my neighbour, whom I expected to hear getting soundly rated for his grimaces and gestures. Instead, however, the leader, to my astonishment, began to explain and apologize for the mistakes in his rendering of certain passages in the music. The piece, which was one of the last of Beethoven's quartettes was, as all who know music will admit, difficult even for accomplished players and I, knowing this, had been admiring the skill shewn by all the players in their parts and thought they had played extremely well. My opinion was quite evidently not shared by my neighbour ; for shortly afterwards he took his fiddle and bow, and taking the leader's seat and the late leader taking second fiddle, the quartette was recommenced, evidently to shew the new arrival's idea as to how it should be played.

The first movement was very complicated

and to me, an amateur listener, uninteresting; it seemed indeed a mere jumble of different passages without any coherence or theme to bind the different instrumental parts together. The playing of the new leader did not do much to improve matters, although his tone, both in breadth and brilliancy (the latter particularly) far surpassed that of the previous leader. Then came the "Scherzo" a beautiful and well defined short movement and here the great superiority of the new leader's playing became apparent. He did not play it very fast, in fact, it was taken more slowly, but his rendering was so entirely different that it seemed another composition from that to which I had listened half-an-hour before. Next came the "Adagio" a most heavenly piece of music, which seemed to me the very sublimity of sound. The contrast between this and the first movement was so great that it seemed to me incomprehensible that a great composer like Beethoven should prelude such a lovely piece of music with a jumble of sound like the first movement. Doubtless the fault lay in my inability to understand such recondite compositions.

Lastly came the "Finale vivace" and this was played with an élan and fire which I never had met before. The speed was moderate and was kept steady throughout; the result of which was that one did not lose the beauty of the music as is too often the case in these "Finale vivaces."

Particularly have I observed this to be the case when they are led by some great executant whose only anxiety is to display his skill in manipulation and who is quite regardless whether he smothers the music or not.

It was by this time quite evident to me that the new leader was a man of some note and I waited rather impatiently for the finish of the quartette in order to learn who he was. I had to restrain my impatience for some time, however, as, at the finish he turned back again to some passages and drawing the second violin's attention to them, played them over, phrasing them in his own way. The second violin then tried them but do as he would, he could not give them the same expression as the leader had, indeed the difference in their rendering of the same passages seemed almost incredible.

At last the leader lost all patience with the violinist and he kept demanding why "*au nom de Dieu*" he did not play it like him, until the second also lost his temper and replied that the reason he did not was because he was not "Monsieur Vieuxtemps," So the secret was out and this was the explanation of what I had heard and seen. After all I might have known that only he could play in such fashion, but I had not expected to meet him here and the contrast between his appearance on the platform and close at hand was great. The difference lay mainly in his countenance, which was rather

heavy and commonplace when in repose, but when he was playing or speaking on any subject which interested him it became at once most vivacious and intelligent and he looked quite another man. He was rather below the middle height, broad-chested and strong-looking. M. Jansen introduced me to him and in the course of conversation remarked that M. Vieuxtemps was a great admirer of the "Cessol" Strad, and had offered several times to buy it. This information rather took away from my pleasure in the introduction, because I immediately looked upon him as a dangerous rival, and although I was bound to admit he was of all men the one into whose hands such an instrument should fall to ensure having full justice done to its beautiful tone, still I was not anxious to see him become the possessor of it. He had a great advantage over me in the fact of his being always on the spot if, at any time, M. Jansen should change his mind and wish to sell the fiddle. And I thought it quite within the bounds of possibility, that he might let him have it because of his unbounded admiration and love of Vieuxtemps and appreciation of his talents. So it was with very mixed feelings that I chatted with the great artiste.

I only had the pleasure of hearing him once again and that was at another of these pleasant little concerts in M. Jansen's rooms when he still possessed in full vigour all his abilities and played with a brilliancy and fire all his own. It was

then I had the pleasure of renewing my acquaintance with the Joseph Guarnerius, which I had heard him play in the City Hall, Glasgow, so many years ago. Shortly before he fell into ill health he gave this violin to a friend, a M. Willmotte of Antwerp, who had been unceasing in his efforts to get M. Vieuxtemps to part with it and the one he played on latterly he bought from M. Boulanger, London. Unfortunately his great gift of playing was very soon taken from him.

Not many years after this last meeting in Brussels he came into MM. Gand and Bernardel's place in Paris one day when I was there. So changed was he that I did not know him, but he, after looking at me two or three times recognized me and greeted me with great cordiality, although owing to his infirmity he could not shake hands. He asked, with a twinkle in his eye, whether I still continued buying up all the fine fiddles I came across to please M. Gand and the other Parisian dealers. "Don't say that," cried M. Gand, "it neither pleases us nor any other dealer here. *Sacré bleu!* he buys every fine one he sees and the worst of it is he gives prices higher than we can ever dream of. The result is that when a violin is brought to us for sale, if we don't give the price the owner wants he simply takes it away and waits for Laurie and sure enough he gets his price."

"Have you any with you now," asked M.

Vieuxtemps. "Yes," I said, "I have three here which I am having put in order and some others at my hotel; but those here are not finished yet and you could only see without hearing them." "My dear friend," said he, "that is all I can do now with any instrument, but my love for them and interest in them is as great as ever, even greater, I think. If you have a fine one amongst those at your hotel do bring it and give me the great pleasure of seeing it."

I hesitated a little and M. Gand, observing this, cried "Ah! the *malin* he has a fine one he does not wish us to see and he won't bring it here. He does not shew us all he buys by any means, especially when he gets them in Paris, as we would recognise them at once and know from whom he got them." "Don't be too sure of that," said I. "I have a fine Strad. at my hotel which I bought here in Paris a day or two ago, and I'll wager you five francs you don't know it and have never seen it before." "Done!" he cried, "down with your money, here's mine; now fetch the fiddle."

I did so and M. Gand seized it and looked at it. He examined it closely, handed it to M. Vieuxtemps and finally called one of his partners, M. Ernest Bernardel, who also examined it. They were quite nonplussed. There was no possible doubt as to the genuineness of the fiddle, but none of them had ever seen it before. M. Gand handed over the money saying, "Take the

money, you have won your bet, now tell us where you found it." "In Paris, as I told you," I said, "but I saw it first some years ago. It was not then for sale and has been here all that time." "Yes, but whereabouts in Paris." "Ah, that's another story and not in the wager," said I. "I'll double the wager if you'll tell." But this I declined to do.

M. Gand tuned it and handed it again to M. Vieuxtemps, but, poor fellow, he could only hold it in position and draw the bow over the strings, using his fingers a very little. He soon stopped, saying, "There, that's all my poor fingers can do now and it only vexes me to try." That was the last time I ever saw him attempt to play.

It is a curious fact that the works of men of genius are seldom or never fully appreciated during their lives and Vieuxtemps was no exception. His compositions shewed genius quite as great, if not greater, than his playing; yet they are only now beginning to be played and appreciated as they so well deserve to be and they will, I am convinced, become more and more popular as time rolls on. During his lifetime they were played very little and only by first class artistes.

The ending of Vieuxtemps' life story was, I think, pathetic in its sadness. His daughter was married to a very clever medical man and they had started to run a health resort on a large scale at Algiers. Here they brought

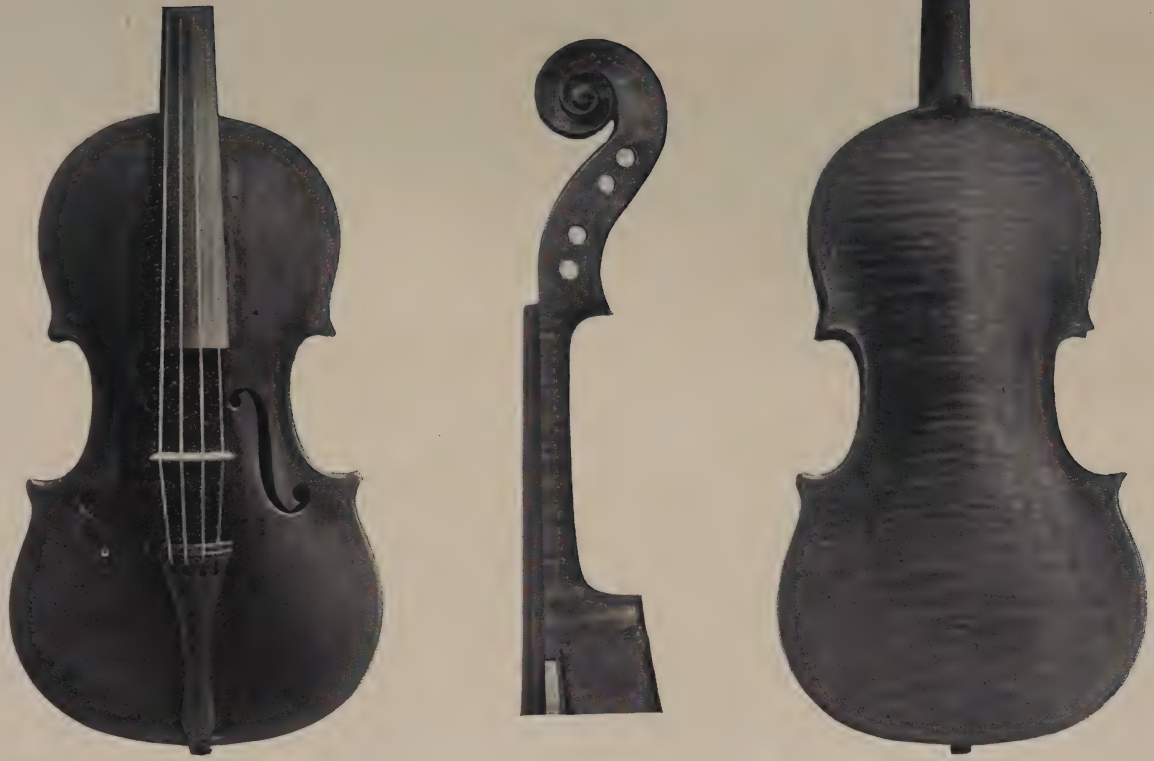


Plate 4]

The "Cessel" Strad.

Vieuxtemps in order to give him every attention possible. Before he had been very long with them, however, his daughter caught a malignant fever and died, and a week afterwards the doctor died also, heart-broken at the loss he had sustained. Thus Vieuxtemps was left with their two children and as all his savings were invested in the health resort which was not yet in proper working order he became entirely dependent on his pension from the Belgian Government. He did not live long after his sudden bereavements and when next I enquired for him I was told he had crossed the border.

I must now return to the " Cessol " Strad. over which I worried myself (needlessly as it turned out) with doubts and fears that I should never acquire it. This was hardly to be wondered at, considering how many likely buyers saw it in M. Jansen's possession ; I supposed of course, that every one who saw it would be as anxious to have it as I was, and would not grumble at the price. The fiddle, which is so well known that I need not describe it, acquired its name from having been in the possession of the Comte de Cessol.

On the death of the Comte the estate was put into the hands of trustees from whom M. N. F. Vuillaume bought several violins. M. Jansen accompanied him on his journey to Nice for this purpose and immediately decided on having the " Cessol " and a Bergonzi violin for himself. He

paid £280 for the "Cessol" which was, as he knew, an unusual price, but the violin was unusual too and he felt that it was worth it. He brought it back to Brussels with him and was always on the alert to induce some fine artiste to come and play on it.

A few years after M. Vieuxtemps' death, M. Jansen's health began to fail and he went to Aix-la-Chapelle to try the hot springs there, taking all his instruments with him, and there I called on him as usual, breaking my journey for the purpose. We had become great friends by this time and M. Jansen was always delighted to see me and hear all that was going on in the fiddle world.

All the hot springs on earth, however, could not renew my friend's vitality,—he was by this time well over the allotted span—and after a while he went to his native town of St. Nicholas, in West Flanders. As I passed there pretty often in coming and going to Ghent from Antwerp and Holland, etc., I still managed to look him up now and again. He rallied a little when he went at first but gradually got weaker and soon joined the great majority.

His nephew, who was his heir, was a most faithful and devoted attendant to him, and M. Jansen frequently impressed on him that when he was no more, the first offer of the violins must be given to Laurie, the price to be fixed by M. Vuillaume. This wish was carefully fulfilled by

the nephew and from him I bought them, paying £400 for the "Cessol" an enormous price then, and £140 for the Bergonzi. The latter was of very rich wood and finely varnished and was in such a perfect state of preservation that I had great difficulty in getting people, artistes as well as amateurs, to believe that it was a genuine Carlo Bergonzi. I sold it finally to a German artiste at a very small profit: I could see quite well that even he was not altogether without his doubts on the subject and would I think have rescinded the bargain after it was made on payment of a few thaler.

Next thing I heard about him was that he had refused an offer of £400 for this same instrument. I wrote to him telling him what I had heard and asking if it were true, and he replied that it was. He declined to part with it at any money as it was his solo instrument; the tone through steady playing had become all he could desire and he was quite sure he could not find a better either in a Strad. or a Joseph.

The "Cessol" I shewed to various dealers in London, more as a treat than with any hope of selling it, for at this time—1872-4—it was surprising how dead the market was, particularly in London, for high priced instruments. There happened to come into one shop where I had brought the "Cessol" a very wealthy amateur to whom the dealer shewed it. He offered £250 for it, but to this offer I made no reply, the dealer,

beckoning me into his place at the back, counselled me not to be too greedy and he might work this customer up to £300, as he was evidently struck with the violin. His commission would, of course, come off that. In vain I assured him I had paid more than that for it myself, "Get away," he said, "you would no more give that than I would for any fiddle ever made." He returned to the shop and managed to get the offer raised to £300 but when I refused that he threw me overboard completely, remarking, for he was a bit of a wag, that I might live in Scotland but I was no Scotchman to prefer a fiddle to such a sum of money. Soon after I disposed of it to a well-known and great artiste who had seen it in Brussels and knew the value of this fine instrument.

CHAPTER XV

A STRAD. STORY

The story of how and where I acquired the Strad., which so puzzled MM. Gand and Bernardel and also won me a wager (the only one I ever did win) I will now tell. Calling one afternoon at a little dealer's place I found him in great spirits and laughing uproariously. A young man was just leaving as I entered and when he had gone as the laughter still continued I demanded what the deuce he was making such a noise about. "I am laughing at that imbecile," said he, "he had the cheek to tell me that his father who plays second fiddle in one of the theatres possesses the finest Strad. in Paris." "Well, why not?" "Why not; because if he had such a thing he would have sold it long ago, although his son says he won't part with it for all Paris. But there is his card with the address; if you like you can call and see it." I took the card and glanced at the name on it, Sameledis, before putting it into my pocket.

I thought no more of the matter until one morning when it was recalled to my mind in

rather a curious way. On the morning in question I went at eleven o'clock to take breakfast with the famous violinist Marsick, in the rue d'Aumale. When I arrived the *concierge* told me he had been obliged to go out but would be back shortly and asked me to come up to his rooms and wait. This I declined to do as I preferred to take a stroll and return later. I went a little way and saw on the corner of another street a long name which I remembered having seen somewhere before ; as I had no recollection of ever having been in the street until now I puzzled my brains as to where I had seen it but with no success.

I returned and found Marsick at home and we breakfasted together. But all through breakfast and afterwards the name of that street kept recurring to my mind until, like a flash, I remembered where I had seen it : on the visiting card of M. Sameledis.

After breakfast I went round to the street again and looked up the number given. I presented my card and asked if I could see M. Sameledis. Certainly I could, and ushering me into a room the attendant retired, and after a little while the gentleman himself made his appearance and welcomed me most effusively. " You are the man of all others I rejoice to meet," he said, " please take off your overcoat and have a seat. If you will excuse my leaving you for a few minutes I will shew you my collection."

Off he went and I took a look round ; certainly there was nothing about the room suggestive of its containing the finest Strad. in Paris but one cannot always judge by appearances. Perhaps, like one man I had met, he kept it in his bed and slept beside it, ready to bolt with it in case of fire. The only sign of a fiddle I could see was a cheap black case on the top of the piano, but I did not expect it would be there as its owner knew the value of it.

When M. Sameledis returned he had both hands and arms full of violins, which he laid down, calmly saying he wished my opinion on them all. This was rather a big order ; clearly he was quite unaware that a fee was customary for each opinion, but I was not surprised at his ignorance on that point, as formerly it was quite a common thing for anyone who bought a fiddle either in a bric-à-brac shop or an auction room to march with it to any dealer and ask his opinion of it without payment of any kind. However, I always insisted on a fee and when the dealers saw that I not only got one, but that even when I did not agree with the owner as to the merits of the fiddle, he thought none the less of my opinion, they too plucked up courage and demanded a fee. Of course, this annoyed a certain class, who twitted them with being *sacré Anglais* like Laurie, who only understood one colour, that of money ; but as the large majority of their better-class clientèle admitted that their

claim was only just, they did not trouble about the others.

I looked over the collection of M. Sameledis but could see at a glance that there wasn't a Strad. among them nor indeed an Italian violin of any sort. They were all old French, that is, from the latter part of last century up till 1820. In every case he had bought wisely and the instruments were good of their class, but they were not what I had come to see. Their owner was so much interested in discussing them that he had apparently quite forgotten to shew me his gem and I did not mention it. At last I rose to go and then he suddenly remembered it and going over to the piano lifted up the black case. I thought, "that is where it is after all; well if the kernel be in keeping with the shell it will not be of much account."

M. Sameledis opened the case and lifted out the violin. After one glance at it I was petrified with astonishment and admiration. A German artiste once told me I might be a good salesman but I was a bad buyer as I could never conceal my admiration for fine instruments, my face too truly reflecting my thoughts and I believe he was right. Certainly I could not hide my admiration for this violin of M. Sameledis. It was made like many more of that period, 1730, of an exceedingly fine quality of pine of medium width in its lines, which were so distinct as to be easily traced from end to end of their length.

The wood in the back and rims was *contre sens* or slab as we call it, very rich in its figures—one of those particularly rare slabs which make a much more handsome back than the conventional herring-boned kind, which are cut with the grain of the wood. At any rate many admire it more.

It was of the large size with very full archings and the edges were heavy though quite in keeping with its massive appearance. It was in perfect preservation, only a very small piece of the rim being worn, where the hand comes in contact when playing, but not the slightest crack anywhere. The varnish was a light brown as was common to nearly all the instruments of that period, that on the back being rather worn, but the nature of the wood on which it lay gave it a depth and brilliance surpassing that on the table. This is also quite a common thing and arises from the fact that the quality of wood employed in making the back is much harder than that of the table. The head was older than that of the body by a good many years, shewing once more that Strad. did not always make a head to suit the instrument, or rather that he did not always make the head and body of an instrument at the same time. The probability is that he made a number of heads at a time and then chose one to suit as nearly as possible the wood in the body of the violin made later.

Altogether the instrument was splendid although

decidedly shewing the work of an old hand (Strad. would be eighty-six at that time), nevertheless, there was nothing hurried or careless about it, every part of it bore the impress of his usual care in finish and detail. My examination of this instrument helped also to confirm another opinion I had, which was that Strad. did not go straight ahead and finish one violin before commencing another; but that after he had made some progress with one he would put it aside, if a new idea struck him on some important point and proceed to carry out his idea on another instrument to see what the effect would be. Also, when he got an order, as he sometimes did from some high personage for a particular size or set of instruments, he would just put aside whatever instrument he was working at and start on his order.

Having completed my examination of the fiddle, I asked M. Sameledis if he would sell it. "No, not for all Paris," he said, "I inherited it from my father, who bought it at a sale in a private house at Nancy, which is my native town." He went on to tell me that his father had paid eighty pounds for it, 2,000 francs, which was at that time considered a very high price, especially in a provincial town; there had, however, been many at the sale anxious to secure it. At his father's death it came into his possession and shortly afterwards the regiment in which he was bandmaster was ordered to China and later

with the allied troops to Pekin, and the violin went with him on his travels. On the return of the regiment to Shanghai he, after a short time, got relieved from the service altogether, and went to Calcutta for some years, but wearying to see his native country—"*La Belle France*"—once more, came home. It was, therefore, not to be wondered at that the violin was unknown in Paris; no dealer or artiste had seen it since his return. He had no intention of selling it, and why should he shew it, he asked? As there was nothing further to be done I took my leave and came away.

During the next three years I called on M. Sameledis every few months, indeed whenever I was in Paris, and was always cordially welcomed by him and his good lady, a fine specimen of a French housewife, who, like her husband, was well advanced in life. But I made no progress towards buying the Strad., in fact, except that he shewed it to me twice of his own free will, I neither saw it nor referred to it during that time, as I knew it would be useless.

Doubtless many of my readers will wonder at my calling and keeping up the acquaintance as I did, when I had no hope of getting him to sell the fiddle. Well, although this was about the stiffest exercise of patience I ever had to undergo in the pursuit of an instrument, yet I knew that very often the most unlikely and unexpected changes take place in people's ideas and circum-

stances and this case might be no exception. Another reason was that apart from fiddles, I grew to like M. Sameledis very much ; he had travelled and seen a great deal more than I had and had acquired wide knowledge from his varied experiences ; and in addition to the innate courtesy of a Frenchman he had from long contact with the English in India and elsewhere, acquired many of their characteristics, particularly a certain reserve both in manners and conversation, which made his friendship a thing to enjoy. A most curious thing about him was that although he understood English perfectly, he could scarcely speak a dozen words of it himself.

He did not hesitate to shew that the enjoyment of my visits was mutual and I was quite convinced that if anything should occur to cause him to part with the fiddle I would get the first offer, and in this surmise I was right, as events proved. In the month of February at the beginning of the fourth year of my visits I received a letter from him saying that his son-in-law had leased the theatre in Calcutta and had written him that he depended on him to conduct and take charge of the music. This offer he, M. Sameledis, had accepted, as having spent such a long time in India he felt it would be like going home, but he did not care to take the Strad. with him again as the climate there, alternating as it did between great heat and excessive damp, would be certain to affect it. So it was mine if I still

wished to have it and if I would come and see him the terms could be arranged. I was at home in Glasgow when this letter reached me, but was off to Paris the following week and secured the violin. The price I paid was £700, rather a long one, but I disposed of it fairly well in a very short time. And that is the history of the "Sameledis" Strad.

CHAPTER XVI

A VISIT TO CREMONA

My first acquaintance with Presenda violins was achieved in a very roundabout manner indeed and the result was not very satisfactory to me. On my first visit to Cremona, I immediately set off, of course, to find out the descendants of the immortal Stradivarius. These I found to be a father and son, the former was Registrar at the Hotel de Ville and the son was an *avocat "un grand bel homme"* as the French say. The Registrar was a hale old gentleman a few years over seventy, who received me most politely. Although he intermixed his conversation with a good many Italian phrases he could muster quite sufficient French to make himself understood and seemed to understand it well when spoken. I told him that the object of my pilgrimage was to see the shrine of his great ancestor and having been informed that he held the key of all the relics of the shrine I had taken the liberty to come to him without any introduction whatever, and hoped he would not take my doing so amiss. Not at all, he assured me, and taking a key from

a bunch that he had he went to a large wooden press, unlocked it and brought out an immense volume with large brass clasps at the corners. Turning to a certain page he shewed me, written in a fine light Italian hand like a lady's, an entry of the birth of Antonius Stradivarius. Taking a similar volume from another press he opened it and shewed me the record of his death. We next went to a large public building; arrived there he led me down a stair and into a large hall filled with tombstones of all shapes and sizes. Many of these were standing up or lying about, without order of any kind; but at the upper end of the hall were a number set up against the wall. These were comparatively new-looking and seemed well preserved and it was to one of these that my guide directed my attention. It bore the name of Antonius Stradivarius, but had a totally different date from that contained in the Registrar's book. I could not understand this difference and applied to my guide for information, but I could not make him understand what it was I wanted to know and had at last to give up trying and we came away again. Later in the day the old gentleman introduced me to his son, who was of the true Italian type, tall and broadly made with a fine, intelligent face and of pleasing address. He was delightfully cordial and appeared much gratified when his father explained the object of my visit. He kindly invited me to dine with him on the following day, which I did, and I

took the opportunity to enquire the cause of the difference between the date on Stradivarius's tombstone and that recorded in the register. He laughed heartily while I was telling him of my efforts to gain the information from his father and his total inability to understand what I wanted. The explanation of the matter was this : in the time of Stradivarius it was a common custom among the *bourgeois* in Italy to prepare their own headstones against the time they would be required. They thus not only assured themselves of having one, but also that the inscription thereon would be such as they would approve and Stradivarius had followed the custom and prepared his own tombstone. This was a most curious revelation to me, hearing it as I did for the first time. My host told me he had been making enquiries for me amongst some old folk whom he thought might be able to give me some further information, but with no result. The only thing he had heard likely to interest me was that an old lady who kept a bric-à-brac shop in Cremona was credited with having in her possession a genuine untouched Cremonese violin. He gave me the name and address before I took leave of him.

The next morning I went to call on the lady and asked if she had any violins for sale. To my utter astonishment she produced a small size Francesco Ruggieri violin, which was just as it had left the maker's hands ; the character-

istic short hand and fingerboard made apparently of boxwood as well as all the other fittings were in their original condition. I asked what the price was and the lady named a high one to begin with, two thousand lire (about eighty pounds) but I declined it at that. She gradually reduced her price to £40, but I told her I would give £12 and no more. As we could not come to terms I came away but while sitting at breakfast next morning the lady arrived carrying the fiddle, minus any covering, in her hand. I invited her to have a seat and a glass of wine which she took still holding on to the fiddle, and we resumed negotiations for the purchase of the instrument. After a long discussion I got it for £20 and although this was considerably over its value at that time I allowed something for getting a genuine violin of the great old school in the town where it was made. I had hopes of getting more from a maker still living there, Ceruti, a very old man. Old as he was he tried to make himself older by adding ten years to his age in order to give weight to his statement that he had known many old people in Cremona who were acquainted with all the great eighteenth-century makers. Certainly I believe he did know some, but anything he had heard from them was mere hearsay and not worth mentioning. Three times I had called to see this man and always found him out, and when at last I did see him he had no time to tell me anything, so anxious

was he to induce me to purchase an old German-made fiddle. This he boldly dubbed an Amati although which of the Amatis made it he couldn't say. I declined to buy it and asked to see some of his own make, but he said he had none. I came away much disappointed from my interview with this link—a feeble one—with the grand old makers.

CHAPTER XVII

FAME BROUGHT BY A STRAD.

I will now relate the purchase and sale of a grand Stradivarius violin, which, while giving me a good deal of trouble one way and another, also brought me fame as a reliable expert. To be a good expert requires three important gifts, which must be inborn and yet require to be developed with much study. These three gifts are an unerring eye, a good memory, and a good ear. The two first are absolutely essential to enable one to distinguish the work of different makers, and also the work of the same maker in instruments of widely different appearance and of different periods of his life. Instruments by the same maker have invariably certain characteristics of his handiwork, which, while unnoticed by ordinary folk, reveal them at once to the expert. The third gift is not considered by any means necessary to the making of an expert, yet I think I am justified in saying that a good ear plays an important part in the work and is a valuable gift, which ought to be cultivated and developed to its utmost, if it were for nothing

else than to be able to distinguish one tone from another and to decide which has the best carrying power and which is in most repute with the majority of musical folk, artistes and amateurs alike. For after all, to the great majority of concert-goers the tone of a violin is the most important part of it, and they neither know nor care who the maker is so long as the player delights them with its music. In this purchase, which I am about to relate, I put my ear to a severe test in judging whether a fiddle was likely to be worth purchasing or not and it did not fail me.

I first saw this Strad. in the shop of J. B. Vuillaume in Paris. It was known as the "Ernst" Strad., and after admiring its beauty in every way I tried its tone, which I thought lovely and quite in keeping with its appearance. I asked if it was in for sale and Vuillaume said it was, although Herr Ernst's widow had kept it for fifteen years as a souvenir of her husband, and had not intended selling it during her lifetime. Some of her friends had strongly urged her to part with it, however, pointing out very sensibly that it required playing on and was deteriorating lying in the case. She, therefore, gave it to Vuillaume to sell for her, naming a very stiff price for it, a ridiculous price as Vuillaume told her. Certainly the price was high and added to that its late owner had latterly blamed the fiddle for its poor tone, although it was really his own failing

health which was to blame for his inability to produce the tone as he had done at first. But he had earned the fiddle a bad reputation and Vuillaume strongly advised me to have nothing to do with it, as he was quite sure I should have the utmost difficulty in finding a purchaser for it. This did not cause me much anxiety as I was sure that in the hands of a capable player the tone would come out all right, but the price was too high, so for two years it lay with Vuillaume and though several lower offers had been made for it, they were all refused by Madame Ernst. At last I told Vuillaume I meant to have it, asking if he could and would take a lower price. No, he said, he could not but I could go and see Madame Ernst herself, although if I were wise I would not think of it at all and certainly not at the price. I had made up my mind to risk it though, and hied off to Madame Ernst's, but with no result. The price named was the only one that would be taken and I must deal with Vuillaume. I, therefore, closed the purchase with him and was greatly pleased with the acquisition of the instrument.

As I was leaving Paris for a few weeks I gave the fiddle to Vuillaume, telling him to get it remounted and put in the best playing order ready for my return. He had this done long before my return, as he had a little experiment of his own on hand in which the Strad. was to take part. As already mentioned he frequently

avowed and firmly believed that the tone of his own new violins was quite as good as that of Strad.'s and here was the opportunity to test them for his own satisfaction. A student from Alard's class at the Conservatoire had taken first prize at a concert in the Public Hall and through him the violins were to be tried. Some days before the concert he was supplied with one of Vuillaume's best, and also the "Ernst" in order that he might become thoroughly acquainted with their stopping, etc. The order in which he was to play the instruments was explained to him. He was to play on the Vuillaume first and if encored was to repeat a portion of the same *morceau* on the Strad. This would be a fair trial of the tones.

The evening of the concert came round in due course and M. Vuillaume, accompanied by one or two intimate friends, set out for the hall. The young player made his début and played his first piece, which was highly applauded and encored ; he came back and repeated a portion as arranged, but absolutely no difference in the tone of the violin was perceptible. M. Vuillaume felt rather puzzled as, although he believed his own violins to have tones as good as those of Strad.'s, he hardly expected them to be exactly similar. He waited till the second half of the programme, when the artiste had two other pieces to play, and shortly after the interval the first one was played. Now indeed there was a

change in the tone which was not clear at all and carried very poorly, indeed, it sounded as if it were muted. The result was the applause was not nearly so hearty as before. His last piece was magnificent, both playing and tone clear and full and he was most heartily applauded and encored, to which he could not respond as there was not time. The concert over, M. Vuillaume invited the player to supper along with his friends at an adjoining restaurant. During supper he asked the artiste if he had found the special strings, which were only on his fiddle, to have a better quality and smoother surface than those on the Strad. "No," said the artist, "I did not." In fact it turned out that when he was tuning the Vuillaume the first string broke and, not having time to put on another before his first piece, he had played both the first and the encore on the Strad. During the interval he put a new string on the Vuillaume and played on it next, but whether due to the strings or what, he knew not, only he felt as if he could not get a tone out of it, and so played his last solo on the Strad. Tableau. Poor Vuillaume's faith in the tone of his own violins was rather rudely shaken by this experiment.

To return to my own affairs once more, I brought the "Ernst" Strad. home, not offering it for sale at that time as I knew it would require time to settle down after being remounted and also that the tone would be affected by the sea

air in crossing the channel. It will seem curious and difficult of belief to many of my readers that violins should be susceptible to *mal-de-mer*, and indeed I did not credit it myself when first told of it. But long experience has taught me that it is so and that the finer the instrument, the more susceptible it is. Most of them do not recover themselves properly for at least a fortnight. I therefore kept it and played it myself for a time and the improvement was marvellous ; even in my hands the tone wakened up considerably. I bought and sold several other Strads. and Josephs during this time, and at last, I thought I would put the "Ernst" on the market. I had become more and more convinced whilst playing it that its bad reputation was not at all deserved, but it had this peculiarity : its tone, although rich and grand, was delicate and would require delicate playing to bring it out and the difficulty would be to find just the right sort of player for it. And now I began to see to what extent its late owner's disparagement of its tone had been credited both by artistes and amateurs ; and despite the fact that they could hear for themselves what a fine tone it had, they would none of them venture to buy it.

I kept it for a while longer, not at all sorry to have the chance, both for the pleasure of playing it and shewing it to friends, and at last the right player for it turned up. I received a note from Madame Neruda, who was touring

with Mr. Charles Hallé, saying that as they were not coming to Glasgow on that tour I might take some violins through to Edinburgh for her to try. In reply I said I would bring among others the "Ernst" Strad. as I thought it would suit her perfectly. Madame Neruda had heard of it, of course, and sent a note saying I was not to trouble as it would hardly be worth while, but I took it with me, and I never saw two people more astounded than were she and Mr. Hallé, when Madame played it to his accompaniment on the piano. It was a perfect revelation to both of them and Mr. Hallé declared no better tone could be found in any violin and that clearly it was, as I had said, a most undeservedly maligned instrument. As I knew Mr. Hallé had often played with the late M. Ernst in public, I asked him if it was not the case that its owner's failing health was accountable for the change in the tone, owing to his inability to bring it out, and he said no doubt it was; at any rate, there had been a vast difference in the receptions he got latterly from those of former days.

The next question that arose was as to its carrying powers in a large hall full of people and the only way to test that was to play it in public, which required courage and nerve. Fortunately for the violin, the lady did not lack these and she took the first opportunity of playing it at a popular concert in St. James' Hall, London. The experiment was a great success and since

that time, now twenty years ago, the instrument has never failed to give the utmost satisfaction, both to artiste and audience. It is one of the finest solo instruments played in public and is in the hands of an artiste who does it the fullest justice.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WAY TO TREAT A VIOLIN

I wish now to record two facts worthy of notice by both artistes and amateurs. It was sixteen years after I had sold Lady Hallé the Strad. that I had it in my hands again. I was in the artistes' rooms at St. James' Hall, London, and was chatting with Lady Hallé and looking at the instrument. Lady Hallé said, "You see I have taken the advice you gave me, when I purchased the violin." For the moment I could not recollect what that advice was, and she continued, "I see you don't remember—well you told me the violin was perfect in all its fittings, which had been done by the great Vuillaume of Paris, and advised me not to have them touched by any one, as without doubt, altering or meddling with them would affect the tone. So please look and tell me if you see any alteration and also if I have kept it properly." I looked it over and saw my old friend's handiwork still visible in every detail and the condition of the violin was perfect in every way. I assured Lady Hallé of these facts to her great pleasure and satisfaction as I was glad to see.

Now contrast that example with this. A young and very eminent violinist who lived in Vienna, in the seventies, was ordered to Pau for his health. He went in the early spring, and before the summer came he died there. A marquis and his lady, who were staying at Pau, were very kind to him and previous to his death had him removed to their house, where they tended him with the greatest kindness until the end. He had with him a splendid Joseph Guarnerius del Jesu violin, which he bequeathed to his kind friends. In course of time they also died and his violin was for sale. As soon as I heard of it I took steps to procure it and managed to do so, although at a very high price. It had been in my possession only a short time when I sold it to an artiste in Germany, a pupil of De Bériot, who had carried off first prize and medal from the Conservatoire of Music in Brussels amid general acclamation. This gentleman professed to be greatly pleased with the instrument, as well he might, for it was in perfect state of preservation. Even the original hand was on it (although it had been lengthened at the upper inside block in the body by a wedge) a very rare thing in a Guarnerius del Jesu. I drew his attention to this fact most particularly and begged, as a great favour, that he would not meddle with it as even though its thickness was a little greater than that of a modern hand, he would very soon get accustomed to it. Also I pointed out that although it had the original

Plate 5]

Joseph Guarnerius del Jesu. Date 1739

bass bar it had been remounted in all other respects by Vuillaume and did not require any further alteration as he himself could hear from its tone. To all this he quite agreed and assured me he would rather have one of his own hands amputated than allow the violin to be altered; he was so well pleased with its tone, which in his hands, was indeed amazing. We parted mutually pleased.

Six or seven months elapsed and in the course of my journeyings I came to the town in Germany where the artiste lived—the sale, I may mention, took place in Belgium—and naturally thought I would call on him and see how the violin was doing. I met him one afternoon in the street, however, and prepared to speak, but, to my utter astonishment, he passed by with a very slight nod of recognition. I stood irresolute for a moment, then, remembering that his sight was defective and that quite possibly he had not recognized me, I turned and went after him. I found on speaking to him that he had seen me perfectly well and I became more and more puzzled by his dry and distant manner. With the intention of cutting the interview short I asked him how the Joseph was pleasing. He gave a scornful smile and said he did not know as he had not seen it for some months.

"How is that," I asked, "have you sold it or lent it to some one?" "No, neither," said he. "Shortly after you sold it to me it began to

lose its tone and continued doing so until there was little or no tone left." "Indeed," I said, "and how is that? Did you have it altered in any way?" "It is not altered in the least," he said, "it is just in the same state as when you left it." "Then will you kindly let me see it," I asked. "What good would that do," he demanded. "Well," I said, "if the violin has lost its tone as you say it has, and has not been meddled with in any way, I am, of course, bound to relieve you of it and will do so." "Oh then," he said, "I will shew it to you."

Off we went to his house and he produced the case and shewed me the instrument. One brief glance explained the mystery. "So," I said, "you have got rid of the original hand after all." "Yes, because I found I could not play with such a thick one." "But you could have had it reduced; besides," I said, "you have had the table off and a new bar and post put in. I thought you said it was unaltered and precisely as I left it with you?" He could make no reply and had the grace to look ashamed. "Very well," I said, "it is quite clear the instrument is of no use to you and you do not value it, will you sell it?" "Yes, willingly," he said, "but I cannot afford to lose much money over it." This I could quite well believe, and I offered him what he had paid for it, at which he was quite overcome and apologized profusely for his manner. I felt the insult to the violin more than

to myself and I would never have forgiven myself had I left it with some one so little able to appreciate its worth.

I was not a little astonished after all this, when the artiste was ushered into my room at the hotel one morning, and after the usual greetings, said he would like the fiddle back. I asked him why, but he did not seem inclined to give his reason, only offering a good round sum as a true bargain. I flatly refused to part with the instrument to him again and told him I hoped it would be a lesson to him in the future to let well alone. I was not a little curious as to what had brought about the change of mind and I soon found out. A dealer in the town, as soon as he heard of the re-purchase of the violin, rushed off to the artiste and demanded why he had sold it, as he had two customers for it who had heard its tone before it was altered. Either of these customers was quite willing to give a higher price than he had paid for it and he advised the artiste to get it back from me at once. This he had attempted to do, with, of course, no result.

On a more careful examination of the instrument I found the damage done was serious enough. I may explain for the benefit of the uninitiated, that the bass bar in a fiddle is slightly off the straight line in the centre of its upper part for a short distance and requires to be sprung strongly into contact with the table by clamps and screws, which give it the support it needs. The repairer,

who had altered the bass bar in this case had glued the bar at the ends while the centre was not in contact with the table at all. The glue at the ends kept the bar from falling certainly but the result was the tone had disappeared.

The owner was not a little surprised I daresay and took it back to the gallant repairer several times. Each time he did so the repairer put in another post making each new one a little thicker and a little longer than the other until he had the left side of the table falling in, while the right side was above the level from the centre to the edge of the *f*. The effect of this was comical to look at, and strange to say the tone had not improved by this master stroke.

Of course, it would never do to admit he had blundered, and he explained matters to the owner by saying that Vuillaume had a clever trick of mounting violins so that they would keep their grand tone long enough to sell, but after that they were done. The owner, who had lived in Paris and had had many old violins repaired by Vuillaume, not one of which had turned out badly, actually believed this or professed to do so. How the violin mountings knew when to give way was not easy to explain as the instrument might be sold in a month or not for twelve months. I brought the violin to Paris and placed it in the hands of MM. Gand and Bernardel to be put right again ; and then I sold it in London to a well-known amateur who eventually placed it on

sale with Mr. Hill. It became the property of the late M. Carrodus.

Now I think the moral of these two incidents is obvious and I would impress the fact upon all who purchase violins for playing on. Take them to a reliable man and get them well mounted and then leave the mountings alone. For undoubtedly the moment you begin altering this or that so surely do you alter the tone, and if the dealer knows his business you can depend on the fiddles being mounted so as to give the best possible tone. Therefore do as Lady Hallé did, leave them alone.

CHAPTER XIX

THE TWO FRENCHMEN AND THE VIOLIN

One meets with amusing cases even in the serious business of judging fiddles as the following story will show. There were two Frenchmen, friends of long standing, amateur violinists and ardent fiddle fanciers. There was this difference between them, however, that while the one confined his purchases to high class and reliable instruments, the other bought only cheap ones of modern make, with which he was never pleased. He thus kept everlastingly changing them and asking the makers to give him others on trial. This they did for a while, but when the trial lasted not for weeks or months but years, a dealer, naturally thinking the fiddle suited, sent in his account. Back would come the fiddle promptly, accompanied by a letter ascribing to it every fault under the sun and wondering how the maker had the temerity to ask for payment. This action on his part was particularly injurious to the makers, as he told every one he met about his letter and the faults of the fiddle.

Now the first gentleman had among other fine instruments, a violin by Gaspar da Salo, the

oldest known maker,—and this violin his friend, gentleman No. 2, pined to possess no matter what price it cost him. For years he pestered No. 1 to sell it him, until at last, sick of his everlasting importunities, his friend gave in and said he would do so as a favour. Once this promise was given No. 2 cooled down considerably about the amount he was willing to pay and from offering any sum its owner liked to name, came down to wanting it at the price its owner had paid for it. As it had been bought thirty years before, he was 'cute enough to know that the value of such an instrument was bound to have risen considerably. His friend, however, knew as well as he the value of his instrument, and declined to sell at its original cost, and hoping to put No. 1 out of conceit with the fiddle, proposed to have it valued by an expert; both binding themselves to accept the valuation, whatever it might be and thus there could be no dispute. This was agreed to, but they could not agree on a French expert and finally decided to submit it to me. As I had never either bought or sold one of this maker's fiddles, and had indeed seen little of them, on account of their great rarity, I declined to act, giving my reasons, but they pressed me to do so to get the matter settled and I therefore valued it as best I could. The sale was concluded and the purchaser seemed pleased.

But alas and alack! the next time I was in

Paris I had a visit from the seller, who asked me to listen to two letters he had received from his friend the week previous. I did listen and was amazed to hear the length to which the man went. His friend No. 1, knowing his little way in regard to purchasing violins had taken the precaution to have a written agreement before selling him the fiddle and so he was for once unable to wriggle out of the bargain. He evidently hoped to gain his end by heaping abuse on his friend until he should be glad to take the fiddle back.

In his first letter he was civil enough and said that, having had to absent himself from Paris for some time, he had given the Gaspar on loan to an artiste to play and, at the same time, have it valued by competent men. On his return he found that the artiste condemned it himself *in toto*, secondly, another amateur had a fine (Italian) violin by an Italian maker, for which only a third of the Gaspar's price had been paid, and against which the poor Gaspar had no chance. He then quoted the opinions of half-a-dozen other amateurs who had never possessed nor had the means of possessing a genuine Italian violin of any kind. The only thing these gentlemen did *not* question was its authenticity and it had been submitted to no other expert. He wound up by saying that, under the circumstances, he would expect the seller to act honestly and take the violin back, refunding the money, of course.

To this the seller replied that the sale had been forced on him, that he held an expert's opinion of the violin and that he declined to take back an instrument which had been disparaged, as it had been, by people who were no authorities on the subject. The next letter he received from his erstwhile friend was such a string of abuse that he did not reply to it. By trying to oblige his friend he had lost him altogether, and he declared in future his friends and business should be kept far apart.

CHAPTER XX

AMATEUR FIDDLE MAKERS

Among all the improvements and ameliorations of the working man's social condition within the last twenty years or so, not the least is the opportunity and encouragement given him to cultivate any hobby or fad he may have. A very favourite hobby with many of them is learning to play the fiddle, the most difficult of all instruments to learn; and close on that comes learning to make a fiddle. To this latter occupation there are now hundreds of devotees where there used to be only dozens and others are always being added to the ranks. Doubtless this is because it seems easier to make a fiddle than to play it. What man has done man can do, is the motto of professional and amateur alike and they go on hoping by steady application to improve; many not without a secret hope that they may one day rival not only their living contemporaries but the best of the old Cremonese and other Italian schools. To every one I give my hearty wish for success in their aspirations and a word of advice at the same time. I have seen many instruments made by amateurs and when these

were shewn me and my opinion asked upon the work, I have found that some of the makers resented my remarks unless they were all praise. It never was my habit to damp their ardour, but where I saw an improvement could be made I unfailingly pointed it out to them. Others again were quite pleased that I should give them these hints and were most grateful to me for taking the trouble. Now I invariably found that this latter class improved their work rapidly, while the former usually stuck where they were, so never be above taking a hint from anyone who knows perhaps more than you do yourself.

During the East End Exhibition, Glasgow, I was appointed Judge of the violins. These were to be made entirely by amateurs. On the day appointed the violins were all put in one room, all names taken off and numbers substituted and, accompanied by one of my daughters to assist in handling them, I was locked in a room with them. It took a long time to go over them all examining workmanship, quality of wood and varnish and most important of all, the tone, and I found that many of them were so well made that only some small points shewed that the makers were amateurs. Others, although of poor workmanship, had a better tone than those of good workmanship, and were thus raised into a higher class because, after all, the tone is the most essential point and fine detail quite secondary. It needs a bit of study to find out the qualities of the

different woods and which parts go best together, but it is a knowledge worth acquiring.

Well, I accomplished my work well pleased to see that my favourite instrument had so many lovers in Glasgow, though, of course, I knew nothing as to who they were. A short time after this an amateur maker called at my house with a fiddle of his own make, upon which he was most anxious to have my opinion. The instrument was very crude but I went over it with him, pointing out where he was doing right and also shewing him its most prominent defects. Finally I placed a fine Vuillaume on the table beside his. He examined them both carefully and said that he really didn't think his could be called a fiddle at all. I told him he mustn't lose heart but should buy a cheap French fiddle and copy it, not only once but as often as he could and by the time he had made half-a-dozen copies he would be surprised at the progress he had made. He thanked me heartily for my advice and went away quite pleased with his interview.

A long time afterwards he called again and reminding me of his former visit, which I had quite forgotten, asked if I would allow him and a friend of his to bring their last and best productions for my inspection and if I would kindly say which was the better model. I named an evening and they came with their instruments. I sent them upstairs to the drawing room, telling them to lay their fiddles on the table and sit

Plate 6]

Stradivarius Violin. Date 1696

Plate 7]

Body of Strad. Violin. Date 1702

Plate 8]

Head of Strad. Date 1702

back from them so that I should not know to whom they belonged. This idea they approved and acted upon and I made due examination of both models.

Although distinctly amateurish, both instruments were fairly well made and here again the one which was inferior in workmanship had the finer tone, so that when I gave them my opinion both were pleased and my first caller was quite elated because his was the better made. I gave them a little lecture on fiddles to which they both listened with great attention.

After it was finished they still seemed loath to depart. At last my first acquaintance screwed up his courage and asked me to do them a very great favour, viz., to show them a Strad. or a Joseph, as they had never yet seen either. I gladly shewed them two Strad.'s and they were completely puzzled, as the two, both splendid specimens of their respective periods, differed widely in nearly every particular. How any one could tell they were both by the same maker fairly beat them and they could not decide which they liked best, either in make or tone.

I explained the essential points in these two which decided their maker, telling them also it was highly probable that the next one I got might differ as much again, the great genius of Strad. enabling him to make two instruments even of the same period totally different. This they said was the best lesson they could have got. I also

shewed them a Joseph which they admired greatly, although they said it was quite unlike the French copies of it they had seen. So the long interview came to an end and after thanking me most heartily for the amount of instruction I had given them and the great treat they had enjoyed, they hoped I would allow them to pay me for it. That, of course, was quite out of the question and we parted with friendly feelings on both sides. These are the kind of amateur makers likely to succeed : anxious to know their faults and ready to start again, and steer clear of former mistakes once they have been pointed out.

CHAPTER XXI

ANOTHER STRAD. STORY

I will now relate an incident which shews up vividly the honesty and great civility of perhaps the poorest grade of working folk in Germany and I am pleased to make it more widely known than my verbal narration of it may have done. I could indeed give many similar illustrations of these qualities in France also, but this one will suffice.

I was staying for a week or two in one of the large towns on the Rhine, and as had happened before on my visits some religious festival was in progress, which entailed two or three days of idleness, no business being done on these days. Taking a stroll along one of the main thoroughfares one day I met an artiste whom I knew and in the course of conversation he mentioned that he had a Strad. for sale if I wanted one. I said I would have a look at it, but he told me he had lent it to a friend of his to play and he was at a small town farther up the Rhine, at the theatre there.

As there was nothing doing where I was I thought I might as well go and hunt it up and

armed with credentials to view the fiddle, off I started and reached the town in about a couple of hours. I had never been there before, although I had often passed it in the train and the evening was closing in by the time I reached it. I had not the artiste's address and made for the theatre hoping to find some one there who could give it to me. The theatre was, of course, closed and although I saw several men connected with it not one could give me the information I wanted.

I next tried the Post Office where I got it from the official in charge of the letter deliveries. The postman of the district volunteered the information that I would not find him at home. I thanked them both and said I would try, and accordingly set off once again. The house in question I found to be a very dark and crowded building evidently let out in floors. The stairs and landing were in total darkness and fairly swarmed with children making it quite a feat to get up them without treading on some of the youngsters.

I asked some of the bigger children which floor the artiste lived on and was answered in full chorus that the Herr lived on the highest floor. Thither I wended my way and reaching it, knocked at the first door. There was no reply from within, but every other door immediately flew open and some women shouted out that the artiste was not in and would not be back until late. His landlady also was out but if I

would tell them what I wanted they could perhaps help me. As everyone's business seemed to be public property here, I told the next-door neighbour what I had come for. Certainly, yes, she knew all about the fiddle and would shew it to me. She fetched her small lamp and turning the handle of the artiste's door (apparently a lock was a thing unknown) she went in followed by some neighbours who were quite interested and a selection of youngsters from the landings.

She went down on her knees in front of a sofa and bringing out a case, laid it on the table saying she did not understand the spring catch and could not open it. I opened it myself and took out the fiddle, which had evidently seen a good deal of service. It had not, however, been damaged seriously in any way and was certainly a genuine Strad. That was enough for me and I proceeded to put it back in its case, but my action was promptly objected to by the whole party who thought I ought to play to them, and I would then hear its beautiful tone. I had not the time, however, and shut the case again to their great disappointment.

I did eventually buy the fiddle and it turned out fairly well. On my way back I could not help reflecting on the very careless and risky manner in which these valuable instruments were sometimes treated. I well remember having about the greatest fright I ever had in connection with fine instruments owing to this jack-easy

treatment of them. I had loaned a very fine instrument to a German artiste to play a solo on and had given it to him a day or two previous that he might get used to it. Walking along on the day of the concert I spied the artiste on his way, as I supposed, to rehearsal. He was very short-sighted and did not see me and I wondered where his or rather *my* fiddle was, as he was not carrying it. Marching along behind him I next saw a diminutive Gretchen swinging a violin case on one finger with every prospect of swinging it into the middle of the street. The mystery was solved, it was my violin, worth £800, which the young lady carried so eerily. I hastily followed them and breathed freely only when I saw them arrive at their destination. I took very good care that such a thing should not occur again.

It is small wonder to me at any rate, not that so many of the old violins have come to grief, but that more have not suffered. If the Strad. which was left lying under a sofa in a crowded tenement, had been stolen or greatly damaged, the man who had the loan of it could no more have paid for it than he could have made another. Its value was £250 and apart from the money loss, who could replace a Strad? I have, after long study and careful observation arrived at the opinion that, although the great majority of Italian instruments have suffered damage more or less, very few have been entirely destroyed. This I attribute mainly to the following reason.

Stringed instruments principally the viol and viol de gamba had been in use long before the violin made its appearance. These instruments were used principally in connection with religious festivals in cathedrals and churches and were, therefore, taken care of by the clergy as things essential to their services. With the introduction of the violin came the addition of a soprano quality to the music which, of course, was a highly important part of it. But the violins were so much smaller than their predecessors that once carefully shut up in their cases, they could easily be left in a safe place in the church and doubtless this was done. Thus they escaped the carrying about from place to place and there was no fear of careless exposure for them.

Moreover the makers, fathers and sons, of those days had virtually a monopoly of the trade and would no doubt charge a price which, while not exorbitant, would yet be sufficiently high to make the buyers careful about preserving the instruments from injury. Most of the buyers, indeed, would probably be men of high rank who, having a love of music, hailed the violin as an instrument able to produce a new and unique variety of it. From the time of their introduction therefore these fine Italian fiddles were in the hands of people who would, and did, take care of them and that I am convinced is the reason so many of them have been preserved for us.

CHAPTER XXII

THE LAST EFFORT OF STRADIVARIUS

At all periods of his career Stradivarius seems to have made some instruments of quite a different form and size from those he was producing at that particular period. One may reasonably suppose that these were made to order and not as experiments for tone, as several of different styles were made long after the well-defined model he adopted at the beginning of his great period—1700. He had by that time exhausted his experiments for tone and save for slight modifications in the arching and corners adhered to the well-known form and size. I would say that, although he shortened the corners and gave a fuller arch to those he made about this time, it was seven or eight years later before he fixed on the full archings on his instruments, which give the best tone.

The greatest and most incomprehensible change of all was his reverting between 1730 and 1736 to the earlier models he had used before 1690. The drawings for these last instruments can be seen in the collections of tracings which are now in the possession of the Marquis de la

Walla at Turin, along with his tools. These drawings depict a quartette of instruments ordered for the Grand Duke or Prince of Tuscany ; the two violins are of the small size with the outlines of the early period before 1690 and the tenor has the same outlines although its size is comparatively larger.

One thing disappointed me in going over these most interesting drawings, which were finely and beautifully done in what we would call a lady's hand but which is quite an ordinary masculine one in Italy, the few words of explanation being evidently written by the same hand. I looked in vain for any single word or even letter which might be ascribed to the great workman himself, taking as my guide for his handwriting the letter in M. Vuillaume's possession and the lettering on the tickets in the violins of 1736. These had all the appearance of having been written by a man more at home in the use of tools than in writing and the drawings bore nothing at all like them.

The drawings and other models in metal, however, establish this interesting and hitherto unnoted fact, that Stradivarius had gone through a long and careful course of study conducted on strictly scientific principles, and that his instruments were consequently not merely the results of the good luck of a clever workman. It is therefore most difficult to find the reason for his occasional return to his earlier models during the years 1730 to 1736. In the latter year he

made four of that model and size, and wrote on the lower margin of the tickets the letters D.A. 92, in order, no doubt, to perpetuate the fact of his working up to that great age. The year 1736 is generally believed to be the last in which he wrought, although allusions are made sometimes to 1737, in the latter months of which he died. These hints, I am glad to say, I was fortunate enough to verify in a most unexpected manner.

I was on pretty good terms with one of the best class of makers and dealers in Paris, who had the reputation of being rather difficult to get on with owing to his peculiar reticence of manner. Personally I always found him pleasant and did business with him whenever he had anything to suit me. He was good enough to say my method of business suited him better than that of his own countrymen, as he knew when I named a price I kept to it, neither going up nor down afterwards. I found it was rumoured that he had a magnificent Stradivarius violin, on which he had lent money to its owner; but as none of my informants had even seen it and the dealer himself had never mentioned it, I, of course, kept my own counsel in the matter.

I passed his shop often at night, while in Paris, on my way to my hotel, usually between ten and eleven p.m. He was generally at that time tranquilly smoking his pipe at the door of the shop before retiring for the night and we had a

chat together. Occasionally he invited me into his back shop to have a small glass of wine with him and finish our fiddle talk, and it was on one of these occasions that he produced a fine Amati violin by the two brothers—Antoine and Gerome. I liked its appearance even by gaslight very much and as the price suited me I bought it. Not having sufficient money with me at the time I arranged with him to come and have breakfast with me the following forenoon at the restaurant "Margery" on the Boulevard adjacent and we could complete the transaction. He came and we finished the business first, then proceeded to breakfast. Towards the end of it he mentioned that he had upstairs in his house a *chef d'oeuvre* of the great maker, and went on to tell me the story of how he acquired it.

Ten years before a gentleman came into his shop and explaining that he was a Russian, staying at the Grand Hotel, said that he had run short of money and wished to borrow £200, for which he would leave security in the shape of the violin. The loan was to stand for one year, at the end of which, if he neither came nor wrote, the dealer was to be at liberty to sell the fiddle. The time expired and nothing was heard of him but the dealer could not bring himself to sell it without trying to find out the owner and give him a chance of regaining it. He had nothing as a clue to his identity save a paper with the number of his room at the Grand Hotel

on it, but he took that and went to the hotel and made inquiries. The visitors' lists for the previous year were looked over, also the account books for the same period but no one answering to the dealer's description could be found.

There were, therefore, two alternatives for my friend, either to sell the instrument and realize his loan on it, or keep it longer in the hope that the owner would come back. As he did not really require the money he decided on the latter course and had kept it in his room all these years. On hearing this explanation I did not urge him to sell, but he promised to shew it to me if I would call round some evening. I did this and was shewn the violin and, to my astonishment, here was the missing link, for this violin proved once for all that Stradivarius not only lived until his 93rd year, but made at least one violin during that year. This one had the same letters on the ticket and was written by the same hand, as that which wrote them on the four violins of the year 1736, but instead of D.A. 92 this one had D.A. 93. The instrument was, however, very different from the four of '36. It was one of the largest of the few he made of extra size during his best period and had the same noble outline. The wood of the back and rims had splendidly marked curls, broad and very distinct. The table was just as good and the wood as carefully chosen with a rather wide grain running from end to end; it was what is

termed "silver" pine. In short, it was made of the very best materials in wood then extant, and they had evidently been carefully chosen and put aside for a special violin. What greater occasion could there be than the making of this instrument, which was to mark the close of the long working life of Stradivarius.

The maker's great age was clearly shewn in the workmanship of it; the cutting of the *ff* was wider and the space at their turn was double indeed nearly treble his ordinary make, and their edges shaky in their cuttings. The inlaying of the purfling was also shaky with heavy borders and corners outside of it, but all was in perfect keeping with the large grand body. The archings of the back and table were flatter and the rims lower than the ordinary ones of his great period, but these curtailments were no doubt made to regulate the quantity of air conducible to tone production for such a large body as this violin had, and the effect was to give a tone rich and grand both in quality and quantity.

It was a violin that had been played on much and well as its tone and the wear of its varnish both in back and front shewed, but it had been carefully used, as beyond that, it had literally no flaw worth mentioning. Both inside and out it was quite clear of the smallest addition, and under these conditions, its tone had become quite phenomenal. Its varnish was a decided brown above a grounding of light yellow that gave

it a rich antique and picturesque appearance difficult to describe. This violin had also one of the features which was specially characteristic of many of his late violins, viz., its magnificently cut head. This head, like those on the 1736 violins, must have been made in his very best days, as it is a masterpiece of sculpture and workmanship. This leads one to the conclusion that the great maker had, as opportunity offered, made a good many heads for future use and fitted them as time went on to special violins, particularly those of his last period.

Now I have no doubt that my readers will hardly credit me when I tell them I courted this dealer for three years after I had seen the violin, but such is the case. Breakfasts and dinners and evening chats went on all that time whenever I was in Paris. I really believe I was the weakest of men when a fine instrument was in question and my little friend knew it. At last the long desired day came and the dealer told me he had made up his mind to sell the violin to me if I wished to buy it. I said, "Yes, I would buy if the price suited me. What did he want for it?" This was a serious consideration and he did not know what to ask. "Would I not make an offer?" "No," I said, "I never did that. I could not be buyer and seller at the same time, but if he would name his price I would say yes or no, and if the price did not suit me, I would then tell him what I was prepared to give."

He withdrew a bit to consult with his workman, but so far as I could judge from the scraps of conversation which reached me, the consultation was not likely to assist him much. The bare idea of asking such a sum as ten thousand francs for a fiddle fairly took the man's breath away, but when when his master boldly asked 20,000 francs—£800—the man threw up his arms with a "*Mon Dieu*" and retired to his bench. I said "No, £600 was my limit to be accepted or declined there and then." My offer was accepted and I became the possessor of the instrument. I only kept it a short time and then sold it to a rich Parisian who baptized it "*Chant de Cygne*" with reference to the well-known legend. Although I had not much profit on the sale, I was rewarded by getting from the purchaser an order for a full quartette of Stradivarius instruments. He also gave me a most cordial invitation to come at any time I was in Paris to his châteaux. I availed myself of his kindness and enjoyed particularly his *soirées musicales* when his orchestra was composed of the best artistes, four of whom played the quartettes on the Stradivarius instruments.

THE END

PRICES OF ITALIAN INSTRUMENTS

The following entries are extracted from his sales account :

June	1, 1876.—Stradivarius violin, 1713	£400
Aug.	15, 1876.— ,, ,, 1702	£500
Sept.	30, 1877.—Stradivarius 'cello, 1713	£437
May	28, 1877.— ,, violin, 1715	£800
Aug.	3, 1877.—Amati violin, 1645	£260
Dec.	28, 1877.—Joseph Guarnerius violin ("Canon")	£620
Jan.	1, 1878.—Stradivarius violin, 1688	£350
April	14, 1878.— ,, violin, 1717	£480
April	12, 1878.—Joseph Guarnerius del Jesu, 1740 ...	£800
Oct.	5, 1878.—Bergonzi tenor	£200
Dec.	17, 1878.—" Lafont's " Strad., 1708	£400
Dec.	2, 1879.—Stradivarius violin, 1701	£435
Aug.	28, 1879.—Jos. Guarnerius del Jesu, 1739 ...	£650
Nov.	8, 1879.—Lupot violin	£44
June	29, 1879.—Jos. Guarnerius, 1744	£320
Jan.	30, 1880.—Stradivarius violin, 1708	£480
Sept.	26, 1880.—Nicolas Amati violin, 1645	£315
Feb.	3, 1880.—Joseph Guarnerius, 1739	£500
Oct.	11, 1880.—Antonius and Hy. Amati ...	£88 10s.
Oct.	22, 1879.—Bergonzi 'cello	£240
Jan.	7, 1880.—Jos. Guarnerius, son of Andrew ...	£32
March	10, 1880.—Stradivarius violin, 1722	£500*
Jan.	11, 1880.—Bergonzi tenor	£80
Feb.	25, 1880.—Stradivarius violin, 1708	£435
May	25, 1880.—Nicholas Amati	£250

*Sold to Dr. Joseph Joachim.

The following is a copy of the sale of the " Ernst " Strad. to Lady Hallé, taken from Mr. Laurie's private ledger.

COPY.

Charles Hallé, Manchester, and Madame Norman Neruda, Manchester and London.

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
1874.						
Nov. 21.—To " Ernst " Stradivarius violin on sight	500	–	–			
To 8 days' use of same	20	–	–			
1875.						
Jan. 8.—By cheque				500	–	–
To charge for use deducted				20	–	–
	£ 520	–	–	520	–	–

INDEX

A

" Ailsa Craig " violin, the, 10
" Alard " Strad., the, xiv–xvii
Alard, Delphin, xv, 46, 55–57, 59, 138
Amati violins, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 49, 134
Amati, Antoine and Gerome, 167

B

Baillot, M., 37–43
Baillot père, 37–39, 42
Banks of Shrewsbury, 20, 21
Bergonzi violins, Carlo, 17, 44, 63–65, 117, 119
Bernardel Bros., 40, 41, 63, 69, 114, 115, 121, 148
Boulanger, M., 114

C

Caraman Chimay, Prince de, 29, 73–76, 78
Carrodus, M., 108, 149
Ceruti, 133
Cessol, Comte de, 117
Chanot, M., 20
" Chant de Cygne," the, 171
Charles IX, 16
Clark, John King, 9, 11, 13
Collins, 27
Cremona, 42, 130, 132, 133 ; violin, 3–5 ; tone, 13
Czar, the, 92

D

Darche, M., 16
De Beriot, Professor, 73–75, 78, 80, 83, 144
Doria, Marquis, 73–75

E

Eadie, John, 9–12
Ernst, Herr, 136, 141 ; Madame, 136, 137

F

Fendt, 20

G

Gabrielli of Florence, 23
Gand, M., 20, 35–37, 39–41, 43, 63–65, 67, 69, 84, 114, 115, 116, 121, 148
Gaspar da Salo violin, a, 150, 152
George IV's violin, 78, 81, 83
Goding, James, xvi
Gofriller violin, a, 44
Guadagnini, J. B., a, 94
Guarnerius violins, Joseph, xiv, 8, 44, 51, 52, 53, 66, 67, 69–71, 74, 114, 119, 140, 144, 145, 157
Guarnerius, Petrus, a, 50, 85

H

Hallé, Lady (Madame Neruda), xiv, 140, 141, 143, 149
Hallé, Charles, 141
Hart, 20
Hill, Mr., 149

I

Italian violins and 'cello, 16, 18, 20, 22, 23, 25, 51, 65, 93, 124, 152, 163

J

Jansen, M., 15, 17–19, 26, 49, 109, 113, 117, 118
Janze, Vicomte de, xvi
Joachim, Dr., xvii, 76

Index

K

"King," Joseph Guarnerius, the, xiv, xvi
Knoop, Baron, xvi

L

Lafont, 55
Landolphus of Milan, a, 23, 24
Leonard, M., 81, 82

M

Macautel, 20
Maggini, a, 73–83
Marsick, 122
Meningand, 29
Metalier, M. Veuve, 46
Montaignaux, a, 85

N

Nicholas, 30–32
Nicholas of Paris, 31
Norman, Barak, a, 18, 19

O

Otto, 93

P

Paganini, 22, 51, 52, 54–62, 66, 67, 69, 70
Panorma, 20
Piatti, 28
Pilly, M., 87, 88, 90, 91, 94, 96, 97
Presenda violins, 130
Prices of violins, xvi, xvii, 23, 24, 29, 32, 33, 38, 39, 73, 75, 81, 118, 119, 120, 129, 133, 162, 171, 172, 173

R

Rothschild, 46
Ruggieri, Francesco, a, 132
Ruggieri of Brescia, J. B., a, 23, 24, 50

S

Sameledis, 121–124, 126–128
Sarasate, 74
Servais of Hal, M., 26–28
Servais (fils), M., 27–30
Sivori, 52, 59–72
Stainer, 22
Stradivarius, xv, 37, 40, 42, 44, 45, 52, 53, 89, 125, 126, 130–132, 138, 157, 164, 165, 168–170
Strad. violins and 'cellos, xiv–xvii, 13, 17, 26–31, 37, 40–42, 44, 74, 79, 89, 108, 115, 121, 123, 124, 127, 129, 135, 157, 160–162, 166–168, 171; the Cessol, 113–120; the Ernst, 136–143
Stradivarius, Paolo, xvi

V

Vieuxtemps, 8, 13, 109, 112–118
Vuillaume, J. B., xv, 15, 17–19, 45–52, 54, 55, 57, 58, 59, 64, 65, 66, 68, 71, 73, 74, 80, 81, 82, 84, 136–139, 143, 145, 148, 156, 165
Vuillaume, N. F., 15–19, 22, 23, 25, 29, 30, 31, 32, 45, 48, 109, 117, 118

W

Walla, Marquis de la, 165
Wienasky, 27
Wilmotte of Antwerp, 114

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 09945 903 2